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Ballot**
*A Complete
Romantic Novel
By* MONA
FARNSWORTH



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VOL. 13, No. 2

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

January, 1949

Complete Romantic Novel

LOVE CASTS A BALLOT

Mona Farnsworth 13



Enmeshed in a web of politics and romance, lovely Honor Winslow has far more than just an election at stake when she bounces her own bonnet into the ring—and makes a bid for success and happiness!

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Lily K. Scott 64

Harriet Silver's love was shadowed by prejudice—but her shining devotion to her hopes and ideals ultimately brought the sunlight of true understanding to others!

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NO ROOM FOR DOUBT

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GIRLS ARE LIKE THAT

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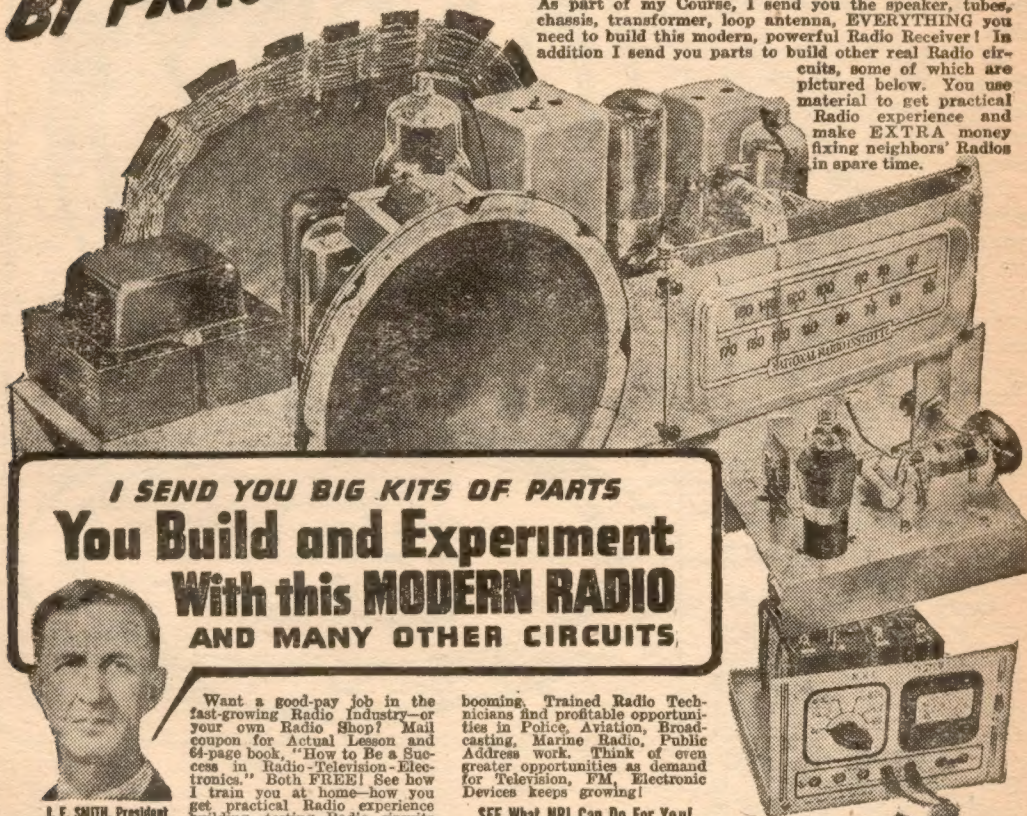
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Beauty Robbers



BEAUTY is much more than the right color nail polish, the newest hairdo—the face cream you use or the way you massage your skin.

To be considered beautiful, you must be completely lovely to the eye—and that means charm, grace and mannerisms.

You can spoil a well-groomed picture by biting your nails—or by picking off your nail polish. Your eyes may be clear, bright and shining—but they won't add to your beauty if you happen to have that cold, fishy stare.

Another beauty killer is poor posture, while standing or sitting. Your posture can tell the world you're an alert, active, likeable individual—or it can say you're lazy and listless.

There are lots of other beauty robbers—we hope you don't own any of them. Be nice—a nice person is considerate of others—she doesn't try to outshine them—she doesn't flaunt herself. She just relaxes—and is beautiful to look at—nice to know.

Sheerer and Sheerer



WE DON'T object too much to the fact that stockings are getting sheerer and sheerer—but we hear slight groans from the budget department over the fact that they are getting more expensive, too.

Learn to make them last longer.

Handle your stockings with care. Lift them carefully from their original wrappings. Sharp edges of paper and cellophane can snag them.

Make sure that your fingernails and hands are smooth. If the skin on your hands is



roughened, slip on a pair of gloves while handling the stockings. Always wash new stockings before wearing.

Wash them in lukewarm, soapy water. Make sure that the soap is a fine grade and that it is entirely dissolved before you dip your stockings into the water. Never rub the stockings with a cake of soap.

Don't twist or wring stockings. Squeeze them gently through the suds. Rinse well, using two or three clear waters. Hang away from direct heat and out of the sun. Protect the rack with a towel before placing the stockings on it. Don't use clothespins and don't hang stockings outdoors. The wind whips them around the clothesline. Make

(Continued on page 8)

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who never thought they could!



Thrilled by Playing

I've had my lessons just a week. I think your course is super. I was more thrilled than words can express when I found I could actually play America, The Merry Widow Waltz and the others.

*J. T., Mancelona, Mich.



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*B. E. A., Kansas City, Mo.



Shares Course With Sister

The teaching is so interesting and the pieces so beautiful I couldn't ask for anything better. I recommend your course highly. My sister shares it with me and feels the same way.

*D. E. G., Wausau, Wisc.



Finding New Joy

I am finding a new joy that I never experienced before, for I have always wanted to play, but had given up hope until I heard of your course.

*C. S. Lucien, Okla.



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I hesitated before sending for your course because of an earlier experience I had with a course by ear from another company. I am playing pieces now I never dreamed I would play after only two months.

*E. T., Prichard, Ala.

*Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by professional models.

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And that's what you can do, right now. Get the proof that you, too, can learn to play your favorite instrument—quickly, easily, in

spare time at home for only a few cents a day. Never mind if you have no musical knowledge or talent. Just read the fascinating booklet and Print and Picture sample that explain all about the U. S. School method. (Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit.) Tear out the coupon now, before you turn the page. U. S. School of Music, 2941 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y. (51st year)

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THE VANITY CASE

(Continued from page 6)

sure the stockings are completely dry before you put them on.

The Victorian Note •



PRICES go up-up-up—but the jewelry trade tells us that 1949 prices will be just about the same as they were last year. And you will notice that jewelry fashion this year is on a definitely Victorian note.

Necklaces, bracelets, brooches and earrings are more important than they've been for years. Pearls continue as a necklace favorite—high style in earrings and rings, too. Cameos have been revived in earrings, pendants, brooches and rings—so go through your jewelry box and dig them up.

Large and elaborate rings, intricately designed, will be high fashion favorites. And for wedding rings, the new bangle band takes first place. These wedding bands are really miniature bracelets reaching to the first knuckle. Very different!

Perfume Pointers



PERFUME, like children, should be seen but not heard. Experts tell us that your perfume will weaken the stronger sex when you use but a dab of it. A blast of perfume is as deadly as dynamite. But a whiff—no more, no less—is a tantalizer. We're told, too, that the lily-of-the-valley scent is practically a love potion. Males love it and users are guaranteed that their men will stay lashed to the home mast.

Did you know that lilies-of-the-valley are the traditional badge of love?

We haven't tried it—but it may work.

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(Continued on page 10)

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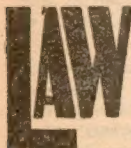


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THE VANITY CASE

(Continued from page 8)

any time of day with perfect ease—fine for the office and it can go right on to cocktail and dinner dates. A trim little velvetene suit that you wear at secretary-ing becomes a charming dinner suit when you don a charming blouse under it.

For dancing, there's nothing more portrait-like and charming than velvetene—it has a way of flattering the skin tones that is sheer magic.

And velvetene seems to make every color glow more vibrantly. Black becomes blacker—and the rich dark red and dark green and moss green looks as though it had stepped straight out of a Victorian portrait.

You'll feel like a princess—whether it's a dinner gown or just a jumper in velvetene.

The Latest in Manicures



THE moon is peeking out—yes, the moons and tips of fingernails are coming out from hiding after a long time under dark polish. And it's nice to see them.

Let's face it—we covered them completely because it was a simpler business of upkeep and we didn't have to worry about keeping the tips clean and white. But even if you're lazy, you'll have to admit that the trend toward lighter polish and uncovered moons and tips are worth the extra trouble.

Start the manicure with a base coat to cover up bumps and then apply the first coat of polish, being careful not to have too much liquid on the brush. Shape an arc around the moon and then brush down the full length of the nail, right to the tip. Quick as a flash wipe the polish off the tip with the fleshy part of the thumb. Apply the second coat the same way, using a little more polish.

When you give yourself your next manicure, remember that well-groomed nails are unpainted at the cuticle and tip.

Always Look Your Best!



BE PREPARED! Don't wait for a date night to take special pains about fixing yourself up. Of course, we all know you want to look your best when a special date comes up—you trot off to your beauty shop for a new hairfix—a

(Continued on page 108)

UNSUSPECTED POWER



The Mysterious Influence In The Air You Breathe!

THE SOUL OF THE UNIVERSE is in the air you breathe. Deposited in your blood—with each inhalation you take—is *the intelligence* that directs the course of the planets through the misty reaches of space, and the strange phenomenon of life itself.

What is it that causes your heart to beat, your lungs to expand and contract? What mind directs *the cells* of your being, each in their purpose—some to create bone, others tissue and hair? What *consciousness* pervades these vibratory *globules of life* and gives them awareness of their Cosmic function?

Are you one of the millions who have looked *beyond yourself* for some external Divine Power or agency? Have you searched in vain for some outer sign or word of Divine assurance when in doubt or in need? Now learn of the *unsuspected power* that exists in every simple breath—and that becomes *part of you*. The ancient Egyptians believed that the essence of life was borne on the wings of the air. The Bible pro-

claims that with the first breath man becomes not just an animated being—but a "*living soul*." Try *this experiment*, and prove a Vital Life Force exists in the air. When you are in pain or despondent take a deep breath. Hold it as long as comfortable—then notice the momentary relief.

This Amazing Free Book

Would you seriously like to know how to draw upon this Intelligence of the Cosmic, with which the air is permeated? You can use it to awaken the creative powers of your mind, and for making life an experience of *achievement*. Use the coupon below for a free copy of the book, "The Mastery of Life." It tells how in the privacy of your home *you may learn* to use these simple, useful, *natural laws*.

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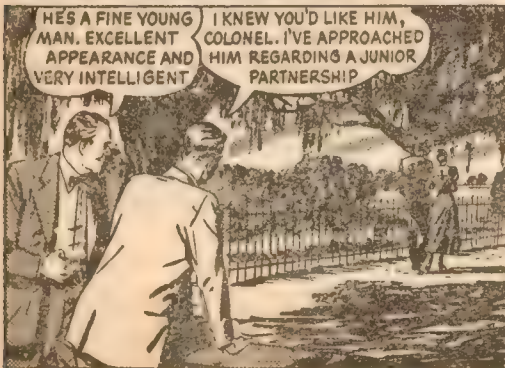
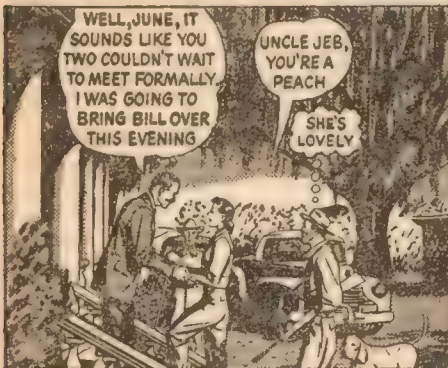
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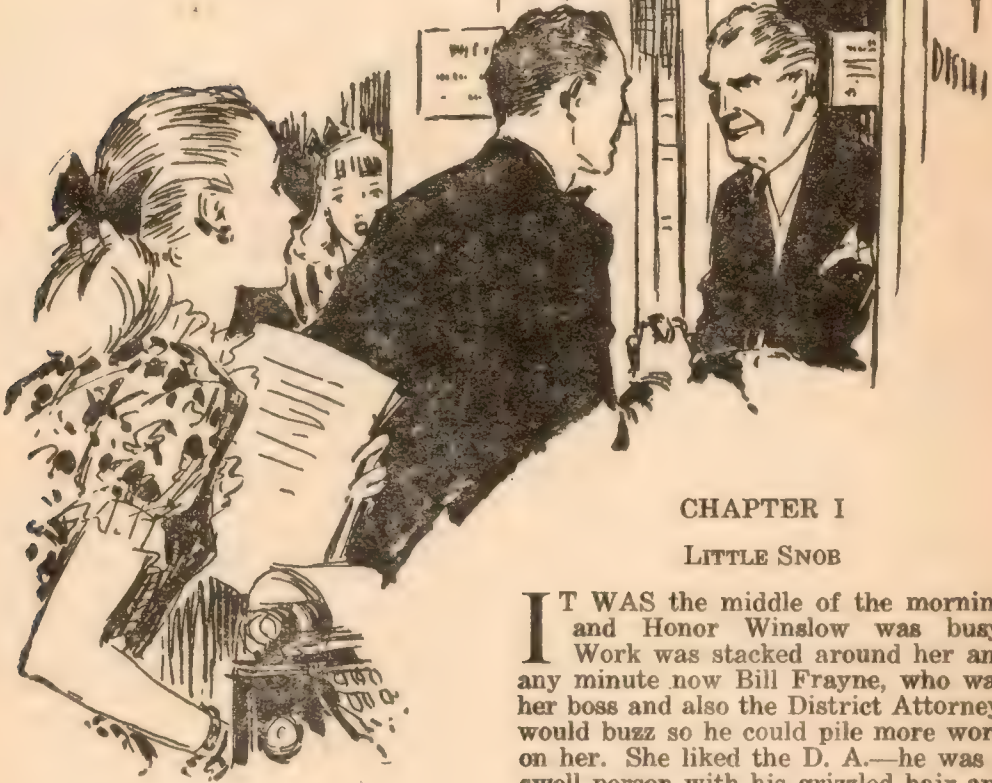
BILL STOPPED THE WILD BOAR'S CHARGE AND THEN...



WILD TURKEY HUNTING IN A SOUTHERN NATIONAL FOREST CAN HARDLY BE CLASSED AS A DANGEROUS SPORT, BUT WHEN A WOUNDED WILD BOAR INTRUDES...



Love casts a ballot



CHAPTER I

LITTLE SNOB

IT WAS the middle of the morning and Honor Winslow was busy. Work was stacked around her and any minute now Bill Frayne, who was her boss and also the District Attorney, would buzz so he could pile more work on her. She liked the D. A.—he was a swell person with his grizzled hair and keen gray eyes—but he certainly knew how to work a girl to death.

The office of the District Attorney in a town like Kelton City, even though it was the biggest place in this end of the State, wasn't an impressive suite of

a novel by
MONA FARNSWORTH

Enmeshed in a web of politics and romance, lovely Honor Winslow has far more than an election at stake when she bounces her bonnet into the ring!

rooms with a dozen clattering typewriters the way it would be, say, in Chicago or New York. No. In Kelton City it was a room in the Courthouse, and Honor and little Susie Grey were all the staff it had. Susie was a cute kid with gold sprinkled brown hair and snapping blue eyes and, devotedly, she did all the odd jobs that Honor had no time for.

Now she was standing beside Honor's desk in the small inner office and she was grinning her gamin grin.

"He's cute as a bug's ear," she was saying. "Curly hair and the *bluest* eyes and miles over six feet with shoulders like—"

"What are you talking about?" Honor demanded. "And is there any sense to it?"

Susie laughed and it was a cute laugh, like bells.

"His name is David Proctor," she said. "And he wants to see the boss."

"He can't see the boss. He has no appointment, and Bill's busy."

"He can't be that busy," said a rolling mellow voice with organ notes in it. "And if he knew that you called him Bill behind his back I bet he'd fire you. Mr. Frayne is a man of dignity."

Honor whirled toward the doorway and, as she spun, she felt her cheeks go bonfire red.

"Who—"

"I'm David Proctor," said the man. "And I have curly hair and blue eyes just like your little girl said."

"She's not *my* little girl. She's—"

"I'm a big girl," said Susie, and scuttled past David to her files in the outer office.

Honor stood up. You can fight better on your feet.

"There is no point in making yourself so thoroughly objectionable," she said, as coldly as she knew how. "I told you that Mr. Frayne is busy, and inasmuch as you have no appointment it will be impossible to see him."

The connecting door into the large inner office opened and Bill Frayne himself stood on the threshold.

"Say, Honor—" he began. Then he saw David Proctor. Amazingly his face lit up and he waved a hand. "Hiya, Dave," he said. "Come on in. You're

just the boy I want to see."

David, in order to gain the doorway beyond, had to pass close to Honor's desk.

"Yah!" he observed as he went by and, though it was well under his breath, it carried all the taunting scorn he wished to put into it.

Honor waited till the door had closed and then she slammed down a batch of papers with such force that they scattered and, furiously, she had to pick them all up again.

IT WAS a good half hour later when David came out again. Honor had her head bent over her typewriter and of course she didn't look up. Not even when she knew he had stopped beside her desk and she could feel him at her shoulder. It seemed a couple of years before he spoke.

"It would do me great honor," he mentioned, "if you would allow me to take you to lunch and—er—apologize for my seeming rudeness." His voice was grave, extremely formal, but when she was trapped into looking up she saw how madly his eyes were twinkling.

She almost smiled. "Bad puns," she observed. "The lowest form of wit."

"I didn't make a pun," said David. "You've got me wrong."

"It would do me great honor," she mimicked. "My name is Honor. See?"

"Ah-h-h," said David, delighted. "I know the gal's name! You're from New England? They went in for names of the attributes. Honor, Patience, Truth—you know."

"My father was born in New England—old stock," Honor said. "He came out with my mother when they were first married. My father"—scorn suddenly edged her tone—"is a minister, with the pioneer spirit. He loves to go to little, hard-to-live-in places where there's no plumbing and nobody has money enough to pay him anything, and to work his heart out. He says people in places like that need a minister more than any wealthy city parish could possibly need him."

"And he's right," said David. "A fine spirit."

"Bah," said Honor.

David grinned at her. "You interest



"Clay doesn't seem to believe that you go out with David Proctor," said Marcia (CHAP. VI)

me strangely," he said. "Get your hat and jacket and come to lunch."

Honor surprised herself by standing up. Then, to save her face, she said, "The only reason I'm coming is because it's my lunch hour anyway."

"Oh, sure," said David.

They ate in a little grill room because David said the coffee was good. It was filled with men in their shirt sleeves who had the grime of toil underneath their fingernails, and a brief scattering of women who might have been their wives.

"Now those," said David, pointing to the line up at the bar, "are the kind of people who interest me. They're life. They're—"

"Those," said Honor pointing through the window, "are the kind of people who interest me."

They were getting out of a new and shining car that seemed to stretch for a quarter of the block. The women—there were two of them—had shinning beautiful hair, one white and one copper. They wore suits that couldn't have been touched for less than two hundred and fifty dollars, and they carried the poise that had cost a lot more than that. The men, one older and one younger, were of the same caste—money, poise, sophistication.

"I'm going to be like that some day," Honor said. "Some day soon."

"You don't seem to have inherited much of your father's spirit," David said.

"I should say not! Why on earth waste my life starving for ideals when there are so many gorgeous things to live for? Clothes and cars and travel!"

"That kind of nonsense takes money," said David.

"I want money," said Honor.

"Oh," David looked at her, his blue eyes thinking things she couldn't quite read. "Have some more coffee?" he offered. And then he said, "It's not money, my girl, that has ever hitched up humanity from one lift to the next—it's ideals. Your father's on the right track."

"Ha," said Honor without mirth. "I'll settle for the money. And thanks for the lunch."

"Oh, I'll take you back to your office. Even with ideals little David still has manners." He grinned at her cheerfully.

When they got back to the office Morton Blakesley was there, his firm old hands folded on his gold-headed cane and his white head bent so that his chin rested on the hands.

Morton Blakesley, ex-Governor and ex-United States Senator, came into the D. A.'s office a lot and, when the D. A. was out, he talked to Honor. They had struck up quite a friendship. There was nothing in the political history of Kelton City that he didn't know. He had been the first mayor when the city got its charter back at the turn of the century and even now that he was old and supposedly retired he still kept a firm finger on the town's busy pulse.

HONOR, coming through the doorway, saw him sitting there, and she turned to David.

"It's really been a nice lunch," she said. "Thanks a lot."

"We'll do it again," said David, and disappeared.

"Who was that?" asked Morton Blakesley, lifting his white head. "Sounded like young Proctor."

"It was," said Honor. "He just took me to lunch."

"Humph!" For a minute the old man's fine eyes took her in as if he was trying to read her mind. Then, "What do you think of him?" he asked.

Honor shrugged. "He's all right. But he's an idealist. We've been fighting about it. Idealism is all right if you're rich so that it doesn't hurt you. I'm not rich. So I've got to be practical."

She walked into her own office and Blakesley followed her in.

"You know," he said, leaning on his cane not because he had to but because it was a good gesture. "You'd make a good politician. Have you ever thought of it?"

"A politician?"

Honor began thinking of it right away. Politics was a fascinating game. She had discovered that since she'd had this job with the District Attorney. It was a game that played on your wits the way a harpist played on the strings, pulling them, twanging them, getting every bit of music there was to get out of them. Honor felt excitement stir, and she knew her eyes got bright.

"Come up and have dinner with Mrs. Blakesley and me tonight," Blakesley said. "Just family. Don't dress."

Honor stared at him.

"You mean—"

The ex-Senator tapped his cane on the floor impatiently.

"I'm inviting you to dinner. At my house. With my wife. What's wrong with that? Aren't you socially acceptable? Didn't you tell me your father was a minister? And I don't doubt your mother is a lady. Well then, come to dinner. Expect you at seven." He eyed her from under the white shrubs of his eyebrows. "If you're a stickler for form, he said, 'I'll have Mrs. Blakesley phone you.'"

"Th-thank you," said Honor. And she heard the old man walk away, thumping a little with his cane and closing the door behind him.

"Well," thought Honor. "Well! And what comes next? What is this the beginning of? Do I start from here and end up as a lady senator or maybe the first lady President?"

A crazy and fantastic idea, but suddenly her ambition was sizzling inside of her and excitement made her small office look as if had suddenly taken on a golden sparkle.

AT FOUR Mrs. Blakesley called.

"My dear"—her voice sounded warm and motherly over the phone—"my husband tells me you have consented to dine with us tonight. I am so glad. But my husband also tells me"—she laughed a little—"that you seemed surprised at his invitation. I think all that means is that you have no idea how often and how much he has spoken of you. He seems to regard you as a kind of protégée. So shall we expect you to be here at seven?"

"Yes," said Honor. "Thank you so much, Mrs. Blakesley."

She hung up slowly and thoughtfully. A protégée, was she?

"I'll wear that black I bought last week," she finally decided. "It's simple and good, and it does things for my hair."

Of course it did. Black always did things for the kind of silver-gilt hair Honor had.

CHAPTER II

GREAT EXPECTATIONS



THE Blakesley house was large and square and white, with tall pillars and a fanlight. It was a beautiful, gracious house and Honor stepped up the walk wondering if politics alone was responsible for it, or did Morton Blakesley have family wealth to begin with.

A butler let her in, and Mrs. Blakesley was waiting for her in front of the fire in the tall white fireplace. She rose, and she was more than motherly. She was gracious and beautiful besides, with her white hair piled high and her flowing gray-blue house gown making her look like a queen.

"Now I know what Morton has been talking about," she said. "My dear, there is something about you. You are—could a girl as young as you be compelling?"

Honor laughed. "That's a strong word, isn't it?"

Margaret Blakesley shook her head. "Perhaps not too strong," she murmured. And then, "What is Morton going to do with you? Do you know?"

"Only that he asked me this afternoon if I'd ever thought of going into politics."

"And had you?"

"Only a little—just the way you think of a lot of things. But I did think of it really when Mr. Blakesley spoke, and I think it would be a lot of fun."

"Fun," said Mrs. Blakesley and her tone was suddenly grave with the sadness that washed over her face. Then she put a hand on Honor's arm. "My dear, don't ever think of it as fun. Politics breaks your heart. It destroys—"

"Here, here, what are you telling my child?" Morton Blakesley was in the doorway, his pink face laughing, his thick white hair brushed to silver. "Don't you tell her anything about politics, because you don't know anything

about them. All you've done is live with me sixty years—but have you ever run for office?"

"Thank heaven no," said Mrs. Blakesley. "Imagine me in the White House."

They went in to dinner on that wave of laughter.

The dining room was wainscotted in white, with a chandelier pendent from the high ceiling and two fine portraits, one over the buffet, the other between the tall windows. The unlit chandelier glittered in the candle light that flowed over the low bowl of roses and the damask and the silver and the crystal.

Slipping into the chair the butler held for her, Honor thought: "This is the way I'm going to live sometime. I'm going to!"

It wasn't until they were back in the white and daffodil-yellow drawing room, with Mrs. Blakesley directing the serving of coffee, that Morton Blakesley got to the point.

"Politics," he said, glinting his blue eyes at Honor. "A great game. Want to play it?"

Honor smiled, so that he knew she wanted to. "What do I do?" she asked.

Blakesley twirled his thick mustache and looked at her.

"What this town needs," he said finally, "is a good smart girl on the Board of Aldermen."

"Morton!" said his wife.

"Keep out of this," he told her amiably. "This is between Honor and me. You want to run for the first girl alderman this town has had? An aldergirl is what you'd be."

He burst out laughing. It was a good, hearty right sound and Honor laughed with him. Then he sobered.

"I'll tell you about this, so you won't think I'm dropping candy into your lap. I've got reasons and they're good ones. I've been watching you ever since you came to work at Bill's—a year, isn't it? Well, so for a year I've been watching you. You're clever and smart, you've got a good head on your shoulders and you're a hard worker. So, 'There she is,' I said to myself, and here you are. This town is getting too fuddy-duddy."

He leaned forward, warming to his subject.

"A mess of stuffed shirts jogging

around the same old merry-go-round. We need new blood, new ideas. We need youth to shove out the old mossbacks. Oh, I know, I'm the oldest of them all but, by gum, I'm no mossback. So," he ended up, "if you want to get in the game we'll play it together. I'll coach you and prime you, and ten gets you two you'll win the election. Hello, Alder-girl!"

He came over and shook both her hands, congratulating her.

"I'll do my best," Honor said. "And thank you."

THEY talked for another hour which made it ten o'clock, and then they sent her home in their chaffeur-driven car. Honor felt dizzy with it all and she was still tripping over stars when she went into the apartment house where she lived.

"So," said a familiar voice, "the galvanizing lady comes home at last."

"David Proctor! And what are you doing here?"

He grinned at her. "I'm not playing nursemaid to you if that's what's on your mind," he told her. "I'm, as a matter of fact, just waking up. Your landlord, if I may make so bold as to congratulate him, decorates his foyer with very comfortable chairs."

"What are you talking about?" asked Honor.

She wasn't walking amongst the stars now. She had been dropped back to earth, and she was cross about it.

David smiled at her. "Bless your innocent heart," he said. "Don't you know who I am? I'm the hardest-working young lad in this or any other state. I'm what they call a struggling young lawyer and I struggle so hard that, at this given instant, I have been without sleep for seventy-two golden hours. Except," he added precisely, "for the nice nap I had in your landlord's chair. Thank him for me when you see him, won't you?"

"You're an idiot," said Honor, laughing. And then she said, "But why no sleep for seventy-two hours? That's a long while."

"As no one knows better than I." David grinned. "But when you're a lawyer operating on a shoe-string you have

to double in all kinds of other jobs that, when success and a larger income appear, you can hire out to other people. I was doubling as a detective. That's why I came to talk to the D. A. this morning."

"Oh," said Honor. It wasn't clear, but she could see it would have to do.

out. So I sat down to wait for you—not knowing your habits I thought maybe you'd gone out to eat and would be right back—and I fell asleep."

"Oh," said Honor. And then, suddenly, she felt sorry for him. "You poor dear," she murmured. "No dinner? No sleep? Nothing?"

"If that is an invitation to come up to your apartment and be fed I accept with pleasure."

"It wasn't an invitation," said Honor. "But come along." And she led the way to the elevator.

She was proud of her apartment—two rooms, kitchen and bath—because she had put the best she had into it. She had combed magazines for ideas, and



"I won't help you—not with one whispered word!" Honor exclaimed defiantly (CHAP. X)

"So you're here because you needed a nap in a chair? Well, don't let me disturb you." And she headed for the elevator.

"Hi!" yelled David, and came after to grab her arm. "You've got me all wrong. You always get me wrong. I bet you do it on purpose. Look, I came here to take you to the movies. I thought that much of you. I'd rather take you to the movies than go home and sleep—even after seventy-two hours."

"Thanks," said Honor.

"All right. So I came and you were

stores for bargains. It was cute. David stood in the doorway and looked it over. The books, the low tables, the soft folds of hangings, the way the greens melted

into peacocks and the peacocks became blues.

"H-m," he said. "The home touch. Will you marry me, Honor?"

"A struggling young lawyer who has to do his own detecting? You want *me* to go seventy-two hours without sleep worrying about where you are? No, Handsome. I'll carve out my own career."

"Well—" David shrugged broad shoulders. "It was an idea."

"Ideas are a dime a dozen," said Honor. And then, watching his face, she added, "I had dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Blakesley tonight. They have a lovely house."

His jaw dropped slightly and his eyes doubled their size. Then he relaxed.

"Old family friends, I suppose?" he asked.

"No, not that," said Honor and then she shut her mouth and said no more because Morton Blakesley had told her to say nothing until he had done a few things he felt ought to be done by way of laying the foundation for her campaign.

For a minute David looked at her and questions sparkled from his eyes, but Honor was smart and made him coffee and scrambled eggs quickly, so his attention was diverted.

"I'm a gallant gentleman at heart," he said, half an hour later, "and I realize that in a town this size a girl's reputation is made of tissue paper, so I'll go—the hour being what it is. But I'll be seeing you. Remember girl—make a note in your little black book—the boy David is here to stay." His tone was as light as his words, but his eyes said he meant it.

HONOR was suddenly disturbed. She put fingers on his arm. And then she didn't know exactly what to say. You can't answer the look in a man's eyes without making a fool of yourself. You just can answer the words he's actually said. So she bit her lips and she laughed a little.

"All right," she said. "Hang around if you like, but remember I'm a practical materialist. I'm out for money—and I won't change."

"Bless you," said David. "That's what

you think." And then he asked, "What's your mother like? I know your father."

"Mother was sweet and patient, and she loved my father," Honor said slowly. "She died when I was a little girl."

David bent down suddenly and kissed Honor's lips. It was a light kiss—perhaps for the motherless little girl she'd been—and it was over quickly and he had gone, closing the door softly.

But for a long time after he had gone, Honor stood still looking at the door with one finger just touching the lips David had so lightly kissed. . . .

The next morning when Bill Frayne called her in for dictation he rolled himself back in his chair for a minute, looking at her. He was a big man with disordered hair and a wide grin and eyes like gimlets. He looked careless and happy-go-lucky and nothing ever got by him.

"So," he said. "The Aldergirl."

Honor said nothing, because she wanted to find out how much he knew first. But she couldn't help smiling.

"All right—all right," Bill said. "Open up. I've been talking to Mort Blakesley and it's okay. You like the idea?"

"I think it's wonderful!" Her tone backed up her words. It was ringing, excited and joyful.

Bill picked up a brass paper cutter and pinged it with his finger nail. Then, his eyes narrowed a little, he slanted a look at her.

"Why do you want to go into politics?" he asked.

Honor looked at him. For a second the words wouldn't come. She couldn't say, "Because I want money and power and this is a good road to reach it." So, for that second, she fumbled.

"Don't be shy about telling the truth," Bill said. "Lots of wise men go into politics for the same reasons you're going in." Was the man a mind reader? "And they get there, too. Power is a great god." His tone was suddenly bitter as he added, "Of course the reason for anybody's playing politics ought to be the good of the people. And the people, believe me, need all the good any bunch of politicians can give 'em." He came down level in his chair with a bounce. "All right. That's over. Take a letter. . . ."

CHAPTER III

"ALDERGIRL"

Two hours later Honor was surprised to find, as the hands of the clock climbed toward twelve, that she was watching each time the door opened—and she was watching for David. Why? What did she expect him to do? Take her to lunch every day? Was she a fool? Twenty-four hours ago she hadn't known the man. But, fool or not, for some reason she certainly didn't bother to analyze she kept watching the door.

But, in the end, it wasn't David who came in. It was Morton Blakesley.

"Lunch," he said. "Come along."

And without asking her how she felt about it he presented her with her coat and hat and waited, patting the gold head of his cane, while she put them on.

The political club to which he took her was an impressive place, with oak paneling and thick carpets, because the party Blakesley belonged to was the moneyed party in Kelton City. They stood for deep-piled carpets and rich hangings. Blakesley took Honor over to places at a big round table that had evidently been saved for them and Blakesley, with a large wave of his hand, introduced her.

"Here she is, folks," he announced. And then to Honor, "You'll discover who these people are sooner or later. I'd have laryngitis if I ran off all their names now."

"I know who most of them are," said Honor.

And it was true. She did. A lot of them were always in and out Bill Frayne's office, a lot of them had their pictures pretty constantly in the newspapers.

One of them, Honor saw to her surprise, was the younger man who had crossed the sidewalk from the long sleek car the day before, the man who had been in the group of moneyed, shining people that she had pointed out to David.

Blakesley, who had followed her eyes, said, "That's Clay Darrel. He's in the State Legislature now, but I'm betting he'll house himself in the Governor's mansion before too long. He's smart. It would pay you to know him. Know as many people as you can from here on. Make friends, do favors if you find a way to do 'em, be warm, be popular. It all counts."



AN HOUR later, when Honor went back to her office, her head was whirling. A whole new life was opening up to her, a brilliant, busy, wonderful life that would

be spent with people who did things, people who led, people who, with their own hands, molded the government under which everyone else lived.

It was exciting and heady. It ran through Honor's veins like bright champagne. She was so busy with her excitement that she only wondered twice—at three, and at four-thirty—where David was.

She had dinner with Blakesley and three of his closest associates. One of them was Matilda Gregson who was connected with the Mayor's office, and Blakesley said she knew more about city politics than all the men in town put together.

"You two stick close together," he told Honor and Matilda. "You'll both go far."

Matilda was tall and slim, with beautifully kept gray hair and a warm smile. Honor liked her, and when she slipped a light arm around Honor's shoulders it seemed that they were already friends.

From the dinner they drove to the other side of the city to Waldron school where, in the large, bare auditorium, a political meeting was in progress. It was the first one Honor had ever attended and her eyes sparkled, watching it. The bombastic speakers, the emotion that rolled in waves over the audience, the fact that she was with the most important men in the room all made Honor feel as if she were dancing on her toes.

Then, across the room, once more she saw Clay Darrel. He was in evening clothes, and he must be on his way to a party or perhaps he had just come from a dinner. He was young to have gone as far as he had politically, which meant that he must be brilliant. And, without

doubt, he was the handsomest man Honor had ever seen. He looked like a Greek god—except that Greek gods were mostly blond and Clay had dark, thickly waved hair and dark eyes under the strong curve of his black brows.

Honor didn't realize how she was staring and taking inventory till suddenly his eyes swung to hers and across the distant space, from one side of the big room to the other, their glances met and locked.

And from the platform a voice boomed:

"Miss Honor Winslow! Miss Winslow is in the audience. Will she please come forward and take her place on the platform?"

Beside her Morton Blakesley said, "Go on, child. Go on up and let them see you. You won't have to say anything. Just bow and look pretty and smart. Go ahead."

She went, and she hoped she looked pretty and smart enough to please Blakesley. But all the time she was on the platform with the hundreds of eyes upon her, the only eyes she was conscious of were the large dark ones belonging to Clay Darrel.

Ten minutes later the meeting broke up. Blakesley introduced her to a couple of hundred people. She smiled and sparkled till her lips were stiff and the sparkle became an empty fizz and then, finally, ex-Senator Blakesley dropped her at the door of her apartment house.

"Good girl," he said. "See you tomorrow. Ever given a public speech? No? We'll groom you fast." And then he lifted his hat in good night.

Honor went up the steps and into the foyer. Last night when she had come in David had been waiting for her in that big chair but tonight, of course—

"Gee whiz," said David. "Any man who wants a word with you has to put in a night for it. And tonight," he added complainingly, "I wasn't sleepy. So all I could do was sit here and wait."

"You could have gone home," said Honor. But her voice said she was glad he hadn't.

He grinned at her. "Look," he said. "Three hours ago I had a fancy idea we might go dancing somewhere. Two hours ago I thought we might still have

a whirl at it, and an hour ago I thought one dance and a cup of coffee would be an idea. But now . . . do you want to go out for a cup of coffee?"

"No," said Honor. "But I'll still make you a cup upstairs if you like."

"Do you think," asked David hopefully, "that there's any chance of this becoming a habit?"

UP IN her apartment, she was putting out the crackers and cheese when he said the word that brought her head around.

"Aldergirl," he observed, and looked at her.

"How—how do you know?" she asked. "You've been here all evening and it wasn't publicly announced until—"

"An hour ago," said David. "Just before the meeting broke up."

"Look," said Honor. "Are you a wizard?"

"You don't have to be in this town." He grinned at her. "All you have to do is get around a little, put two and two together, find out what makes people jump and which way they jump when they do jump and you come up with the answers."

"Oh," said Honor. "As simple as that."

"Aldergirl," said David.

"All right!" blazed Honor. "So I'm going to run for alderman and I like it and I don't see what business it is of yours, and if you're going to criticize me you can shut up right now." And then stopped, wondering why she had blazed out so suddenly, and knew it was because of a certain light in David's blue eyes.

"I'm not going to criticize you," he said. "I'm happy if you are." His tone was easy, relaxed. "Just tell me one thing. Why are you doing it? What's your reason?"

"Bill Frayne asked me that," Honor said.

"And did you tell him?"

"I didn't have to. He knew."

David sighed. "I was afraid of that," he murmured. And then, "For gosh sakes, isn't that coffee ready yet?"

Half an hour later when he said good night Honor realized she was waiting

for him to kiss her. He didn't. He just offered a gay salute and went out, closing the door behind him. Honor stood there feeling definitely let down. And that was a crazy way for her to feel. For heaven's sake, did she *want* him to kiss her?

The next few days were such a whirl that Honor didn't even have time to think. Blakesley, true to his word, was grooming her and it was as fast and as concentrated a process as a one-minute car wash.

He talked Bill Frayne into giving her a couple of days off. "You won't have her at all after election day, so you might as well get used to it," he had said, and for those two days she worked harder than she had ever worked in the D.A.'s office.

She learned what the city wanted and what it didn't want—according to the men who ran it. She was told what the job of alderman meant and what she could do with it if she got it. She met thousands of people, and she became a better and better friend of Matilda Gregson.

She also spent an hour a day finding out how to deliver a public speech. To her surprise Honor found she was good at it. Maybe the fact that her father was a minister helped.

All this went on during every waking hour that she didn't have to be at the office, and then after that far into the night. She would come home, suddenly let down and exhausted after the excitement and activity stopped, and there would be David. Once or twice she was early enough so that they went out to the favorite grill of David's to eat. But most of the time it was easier and quicker to go up to Honor's apartment where David would sit her down in a deep chair while, with masculine pride, he would make their coffee.

Once she said, holding the cup and waiting for it to cool, "You don't like what I'm doing, do you?"

"Why?" His eyes glinted at her. "I haven't said a thing."

"You don't have to. It sticks out of you like warts."

David smiled at her, a kindly, big-brotherly smile that made her want to throw something.

"Such insight," he murmured. "Such intuition. The girl is brilliant. She will go far."

"Shut up," said Honor. And then, "Why don't you like what I'm doing?"

David stirred his coffee and tasted it then, fastidiously, he put in half a dozen grains more sugar.

"Sometimes," said Honor. "I could kill you."

"Homicide?" asked David. "Or premeditated murder?" His good old grin came back again. "Darling, you're beautiful—you're more than beautiful. You've got something I can't keep away from. You—"

"Would you, by any chance," asked Honor, "be trying to blind me with flattery from the question I asked?"

David laughed out loud. "See?" he asked the ceiling. "I told you the gal was smart."

SUDDENLY Honor lost patience. It was late—it was always late—she was tired and she wanted her question answered.

"Why don't you like what I'm doing?" she asked demandingly.

David came over and took her coffee cup gently away from her, setting it carefully down on the coffee table. Then he sat down on the arm of her chair.

"Could be," he said slowly, "that I'm of the school that feels every man should choose his own game. Live and let live. You know. Could be I'd like to see what you're going to do with what you've got. Maybe I'd like to find out for sure which is stronger—training or heredity. And it might be"—he slanted a look down at her and tipped her chin up with one forefinger—"it just might be that I'd rather see you in a ruffled apron waiting at a picket gate while an apple pie bubbles in the oven than to see you making political promises from a platform. Now you've got all the dope," he ended. "What do you think?"

Bending, he slowly and thoroughly kissed her.

As soon as she could, because of the way her breath went and her heart stopped and weakness ran through her like rain, she pushed him away.

"Go home," she said. "Please! I'm tired, and all you do is argue with me

and upset me." He hadn't argued with her and she was being unfair and she knew it. "Go on home," she said.

"All right," said David. "If that's the way you feel about it." And he went.

Honor was so surprised that for an endless minute she just stared at the door. She said loudly, "Darn him!" and it sounded as if she were on the verge of tears. But she was very tired. . . .

The next Monday evening, in the same high school auditorium on the other side of town, Honor made her maiden speech. For some reason she wasn't frightened at all. She sat on the platform and looked at the sea of faces below her and her heart didn't even skip a beat. But she'd never been scared when she'd had to recite in school, and she'd never had stage fright when she'd been in school plays, and this was just part of that.

It was when she got up that she saw Clay Darrel. He was in the middle of the room and his dark eyes looked enormous because he didn't take them away from her face once. Honor looked back at him for a minute, then pulled in her breath and began to talk.

Afterward she had no memory of anything she had said, and later she was to learn that that was a good sign. It meant that she was so stuffed with her subject that the words just boiled up out of her, convincing and strong.

Other people remembered the things she said, but when Honor was really good she never knew. So, this first time, she told all the other speakers on the platform how good they were and she listened to them tell her how good she was, and then went down the three little steps to the floor. And there was Clay Darrel waiting for her.

"Wonderful!" he said. And his voice was as warmly handsome as he was. You could understand how a voice like that would do a lot in getting a man ahead in politics. He held Honor's hand and his grasp was like his voice. "You have a future," he assured her. "I have heard many people — thousands — but seldom anyone with the gift you have. You have a compelling personality."

Honor laughed. "That's the word Mrs. Blakesley used," she said. "Thank you."

"And aren't you going to present me?" inquired a flutelike voice—and there was the girl who had been with Clay Darrel the first time Honor had seen him, the girl with the shining and sophisticated beauty, the girl of the long black car.

"Why of course I'm going to present you," Clay said warmly. "Miss Winslow, this is Marcia Polluck and"—his smile was like light—"I hope you'll be the best of friends."

Honor smiled. "I'm sure we will. How do you do, Miss Polluck?"

Marcia smiled, too, and put her hand possessively on Clay Darrel's arm.

"We must be going, darling," she said. "We promised Dad—remember?" Her voice was sweet as a bird call.

"Of course we'll go," said Clay smoothly and he bowed to Honor. "They said it was your maiden speech and"—his eyes smiled—"it was truly most exceptional."

"Come, Clay," said Marcia.

CHAPTER IV

NEW ESCORT



CLAY DARREL, for a second, didn't move. His eyes were still holding Marcia's eyes almost as if he was trying to send her a wordless message. Then he bowed to Honor again, turned to Marcia and was gone.

Later in Blakesley's car the old ex-Senator said, "Saw you talking to Clay Darrel. Possessive women make me sick!"

"Clay Darrel a possessive woman, Senator?" Honor said mischievously.

"You know what I mean," he puffed. "That Marcia Polluck. It's Dan Polluck's business if he wants to give Clay a boost by backing his election—it doesn't mean that he's bought him for his daughter."

"Oh," said Honor.

Blakesley took out a cigar and bit the end of it.

"In my day a girl waited till a man fell in love with her," he said. "She

didn't go out and rope him with a string of her father's greenbacks."

Honor laughed. "Oh, come now, Senator," she said. "You're not that old. Women have been in the business of trapping men since Eve."

"You minx," said Blakesley, and dropped her at her apartment house.

She walked up the steps and through the door slowly, pretended to be completely innocent of the knowledge that David was waiting for her. Then, suddenly, she discovered that David was not waiting for her. The chair where he usually sat was empty, the foyer was empty. She was completely alone.

Of course she was glad. It was good not to have to stay up an extra three-quarters of an hour talking to him. But where on earth was he?

She went up in the elevator feeling as if somebody had pulled the earth right out from under her. Which was a silly way to feel when her life was crammed-jammed full, even if she never saw David again. So she stopped thinking of him and made herself think instead of Clay Darrel, his eyes and the way he had looked at her, and the probability that, if Marcia was going possessive merely because her father had backed Clay in the last campaign, it must mean that Clay was not in love with her.

Honor turned that thought in her mind, savoring it, and the last thing she saw behind her eyelids just as she was drifting off to sleep was the majestically pillared white front of the Governor's mansion with the Governor—who looked like Clay—and the Governor's lady—who looked strangely fa-

miliar—posed on the steps.

Of course marrying a man who might be the next governor would be considerable of a shortcut. Easier and quicker than working your way up yourself. Clay Darrel, who was the Governor on the steps and was also beside Honor, who was the Governor's lady and was also herself off somewhere talking to Clay, listened. But of course the whole thing was only a dream and silly.

Clay Darrel called her the next morning. Honor was eating breakfast in her little nook off her pocket-sized kitchen when the phone rang and she went quickly, the name "David" ringing a bell within her.

"Forgive me for calling so early." Clay's voice was warm and mellow. "But I wanted to talk to you before you got to the office. Office conversations have to be so formal."

"Yes," said Honor wonderingly, "they do."

"Have you seen the morning papers?" he asked. "They give you a big boost. You've going over with a bang, Miss Winslow."

"Do you think so?" murmured Honor. And thought, "A piece about me in the paper! I wonder—"

"They ran a picture of you, too," Clay said. "But it was just a flash shot that a reporter took and it doesn't do you justice at all. You're—very beautiful, Miss Winslow."

"Thank you," said Honor, making it demure.

"You see," said Clay, "I couldn't have said all this over an office phone. All I

[Turn page]

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could have done then was to ask you for lunch."

Honor waited and he said nothing, so there was silence.

"Are you—is this—I mean am I being invited to luncheon?" she finally murmured.

"Certainly," said Clay. And then softly, "You'll come, won't you?"

"I—don't know," Honor said. "I'll have to ask the Senator what my plans are for the day. I usually lunch with him at the Club. I'm still keeping my job, you see. I have to till after election, when I get another, so my time is limited and the Senator takes up all of it."

Clay chuckled. "Well, I'll bulldoze the Senator then. Good-by."

HE EVIDENTLY succeeded, because when Honor came out of the elevator at twelve-thirty to meet Blakesley as she usually did, there was Clay Darrel in a gleaming sea-green convertible waiting for her. He slid out from under the wheel immediately and came around to her with both hands out.

"Just as beautiful in the daytime," he said. "I didn't believe it was possible."

Honor smiled up at him, making her lashes flicker and her dimples come out.

"Don't think for a minute I'm going to waste this hour sharing you with a hundred people at the Club," Clay said. "I'm going to keep you all to myself, and we're going where we can dance. Do you like the food in the Omar Room?"

"I've never been there," said Honor.

The Omar Room, thick carpets, soft music, silent waiters, plush atmosphere—no, Honor had never been there. And she thought suddenly, "Who would have taken me there? David? With his creeping law practise and his pocket-book limited to a couple of cups of coffee?" A bubble of laughter rose in her throat and she bit her lips against it. Hysteria. And why get hysterical at this point?

They went to the Omar Room, and their table was the best in the place.

"Senator Darrel, sir—yes, sir—yes, indeed, sir," mumbled the head waiter

as he ushered them in.

"I'm only a State Senator," Clay said to Honor, grinning at he sat down, "but you'd think I'd come straight from Washington."

"You will some time," said Honor. "And how will you feel when you're Governor?" Suddenly with the words she remembered her dream and her face got slowly scarlet.

"You're wonderful when you blush," Clay said. "But what are you blushing for?"

"I'm training myself to do it at will," Honor said. "It'll be a great asset for the campaign, don't you think?"

Clay laughed at her. "Smart," he said. "And quick."

They danced almost more than ate, neglecting filet mignon for a rumba.

"You're the most wonderful thing I've ever danced with," said Clay, slanting his eyes at her. "You're a cloud, you're a breeze, you're a—"

"Thing," said Honor. "You just said so." And she laughed at him, tossing her head back and letting him see just the glint of her eyes between her lashes.

His arms tightened around her and, for a minute, she felt his cheek against her hair.

"Beautiful—beautiful!" he whispered. "You're nothing but beautiful."

She didn't move her head, she didn't say a word, and for a moment as the music flowed around them they just looked at each other.

That evening it was Clay who took her to the rally that was, this time, in Folger's Hall, a big place over the fire house.

"I've talked to the Senator," he said, "and he's going to let me take you around. But he says if he catches me playing hockey and going off dancing with you that he'll ruin me the next time I'm up for election. He could do it, too," he added thoughtfully. "That man has more power in the State than the Governor."

"The thing to do," said Honor, "is to have that much power in the country. What's a state? Just a forty-eighth part of the whole thing."

"Listen to her!" said Clay admiringly. "And she's running to be a mere

cog in a city government."

"Ha!" said Honor. "And how old am I? How many years have I got to climb up? Plenty. And, my good man, I'll get there."

"I'll bet you will, at that," said Clay. "No wonder Blakesley's busting with enthusiasm about you."

After the meeting was over he wanted to go dancing, but Honor shook her head.

"Beauty sleep," she told him, "is a cold necessity when you have to persuade people to vote for you. I'm going straight home to bed."

BUT, though she wouldn't admit it, that was only half her reason for going straight home. The other half rose from the high-backed foyer chair as she closed the street door of her apartment house.

"Hiya," said David. "The way you run around! I don't see why," he added complainingly, "I had to fall for a girl who has no time for me. Lunch with a State Senator, dinner with an old ex-Senator, all evening running here and there in a sea-green convertible—"

"How do you know all this?" demanded Honor. "Do I have a low spy on my hands?"

David laughed at her. "I get around," he said. "And this is a small town—small enough anyhow so that big bugs like Darrel get the eye." He grinned at her. "Let's go dancing. It's early yet."

"I came home early to get some beauty sleep," said Honor.

But she knew she wouldn't get it. She had been too tired to go out any place with Clay, but somehow she wasn't too tired for David.

He took her out, in his sedan that was a far cry from the sea-green convertible, to a place on the turnpike where they danced on a long glassed-in veranda and sat at a little table in the corner where they could see a moon sailing over the treetops.

David didn't dance with the smooth-cream finish that Clay had but, somehow, it was better. David didn't dance to impress anybody, he danced because he and the music had got together and they liked each other. Rhythm was a

part of him, and he made it part of Honor and the three of them had a wonderful time.

He held her as if she were something precious, carefully, tenderly. He wasn't doing that to impress her either; he was doing it because that was the way he felt and he couldn't help it.

When they went back to the table again he leaned across the small candlelit square looking at her.

"I wonder," he said slowly, "if you know what you're doing?"

She smiled at him sweetly. "You mean that now you don't approve of Clay Darrel?"

"That's part of it," he said. "Though that handsome tailor's dummy doesn't bother me. In the end, my lamb, you're going to marry me, struggling law practise and all. By running around with the young and dashing Senator all you're doing is postponing matters. You're not, let us say, avoiding your fate."

He grinned at her.

"My fate!" Honor laughed right out loud. "My dear lad, I wouldn't marry you if you were the last two men in the world. You and your high, wide, and empty ideals. You and your sniveling law practise. Why, you don't make as much in a year as the man I'll marry will make in a month. You—"

"Still out for gold and glory," said David. "That's what I wanted to find out." He looked at her and his eyes were quizzical. "Some day you'll change, baby," he told her. "Want to dance?"

"No, I don't," said Honor crossly. "I want to go home."

David didn't move. "Look," he said. "If you discovered that outfit that's boosting you was so rotten it smelled on ice would you still keep on running with them?"

"What do you mean?" The words were like pistol shots. "Are you trying to imply—"

"I'm implying nothing," said David. "Maybe the whole thing's as pure as angel cake. I wouldn't say because I'm a lawyer and I know a lot about libel laws. It's all part of my business. I'm just asking you."

"Take me home," said Honor. "Or I'll go alone."

CHAPTER V

A BOUT WITH MARCIA



DAVID took Honor home and they didn't talk much because Honor was thinking. It had never occurred to her before to balance what she wanted with the

price she might have to pay for it—and she wondered. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Blakesley and Clay and all of them were running a machine for their own benefit and not good government for the people. Would she still—with power and a rich future before her—play along, or would she turn Puritan?

"Think it over," David said, as if he were reading her mind. "It's a neat question."

When he slid his car to the curb in front of her apartment he just said good night when he ran around to open the door for her, and promptly drove off again.

"He'd have no use for me if I ever did anything questionable," she thought. "He's honest to his backbone, his eyes are honest, and his grin, and just the sound of his voice. He'd drop me—*blorp!*—if I wasn't honest, too." And then she thought, "That might be a good thing, David's dropping me. It's a nuisance the way he tells me he'll never let me go and that he's going to marry me in the end. Phooie! I wouldn't marry him if—"

She was unlocking her apartment door by this time and she shut off all thought of David as she closed it behind her.

It was two minutes later—Honor had just taken off her hat and automatically fluffed up her hair—when her doorbell rang. "David?" she thought. "But why? He hasn't been up here, so he can't have left anything."

She opened the door.

"Hello," said Marcia Polluck.

"Why, hello," said Honor, and stood there blankly.

"May I come in?"

Marcia was in evening clothes and

the froth of her enormously full skirt just matched the green of her eyes. Her hair was the color of a new penny under the light, and the waves rested on her shoulders as if they were glad to be there.

"Of course come in," Honor said. She stood aside till Marcia was in and the door was closed, then she led the way into the living room. "Will you sit down? Shall I take your wrap?"

"Be very polite," thought Honor. "Never run the risk of making an enemy. Diplomacy, my girl, diplomacy."

"No thanks," Marcia said. "I'll say what I have to say standing up and I'm sorry it has to be in your living room. I'd have preferred neutral ground. But"—she shrugged lovely shoulders—"all the neutral ground I could think of was pretty public. So I came away from the Grimmlings party to sit outside in my car until you came home. You seem to have come home twice. Once with Clay, and now with David Proctor. You work fast, lady. You lost not five minutes going in after you'd said good night to Clay and coming out with David. You—"

"Keep quiet!" Anger, surging up and breaking into a crash of fury, made Honor stutter. "Don't you d-dare stand there and talk to me like that! I won't have it. You great big beautiful fraud! You're such an empty-headed nit-wit that you have to buy men to pay you attention with your father's money. You—"

"You keep quiet! And you keep your hands off Clay Darrel or I'll see that he's ruined. I'll see that his future isn't worth the ash in an ashcan. That's what I came up here to tell you. You leave Clay alone!"

"And you get out of here!" Honor whirled past her and flung the door open. "Get out!" she stormed. "Get out!"

"I'll get out, and gladly."

Marcia's skirts bounced as she strode to the door, her red head high, her green eyes blazing. And, as she passed Honor, she snapped her slim white fingers not an inch from Honor's nose.

Honor slapped her. Hard. Yanking her around with her left hand gripping a soft bare shoulder and slapping her

with the good palm of her right hand. And then she slammed the door so that several things rattled and the echo of it bounded from wall to wall.

Marcia banged on the door once, venting her rage on the tough wood panels, then Honor heard her running into the elevator that was still waiting with its door open, and she heard the bang of the door and the clanging echo that kept rattling after the elevator had gone.

HONOR, a little weakly, leaned against the wall.

"'Diplomacy,'" she said out loud. "'Never make an enemy.' Oh, boy."

Slowly, beginning to realize the full extent of what she had done, Honor began to get ready for bed. If Clay's career could be ruined by Marcia's father, what could happen to her own career now that Marcia was a hearty enemy?

Honor's mind told her sensibly that Marcia's father wasn't such an empty-headed nincompoop that he would go around pushing people down because his daughter didn't take a fancy to them. But Honor's instinct told her that Marcia was a girl who had never failed to get her own way in her whole life and, if she put her mind to it, she could make her father do practically anything.

However, when Honor woke up the next morning to bright sunlight pouring through the windows and the phone bell ringing, she felt better.

Clay's voice over the phone was warm and gay.

"I'll stop by and drive you down to the office," he offered. "And we can lunch again in the Omar Room if you like."

"I don't think you'd better stop for me, and I'm afraid lunching is out," Honor said. "I'm sorry."

"What's the matter?" Clay's words were crisp and quick. The usual organ tones were sharp.

"I . . . Perhaps it isn't the kind of thing to discuss over the phone. I mean—"

"Then I'll be around for you. In ten minutes." And the click that meant his hanging up the phone was sharp and final in her ear.

Ten minutes later, to the second, his car rubbed the curb in front of the apartment house and Honor walked out.

"Prompt girl," Clay approved. "That's what I like. And you haven't had time for breakfast so we'll pick some up on the way. . . . Now tell me what all this nonsense is about."

Honor plunged into the middle of it. "Marcia came up to my place last night. It seems she doesn't like to have you take me here and there. She said if it continued your present career that looks so bright and shining would have frayed edges. Or words to that effect."

"The devil with Marcia!" said Clay. His face was red, with a tight white line around his compressed lips, and his dark eyes were black with anger.

"Exactly how much power does Dan Polluck have, and how much power does Marcia have over him?" Honor asked.

"Marcia is a spoiled brat, and Dan Polluck's never learned how to say no to her since her mother died. But Dan Polluck isn't much of a noise outside the city. He's got money, but not special influence. I mean in the large."

"But he has in the city?"

"His money has. Anybody's money has. But I've gone beyond the city. Polluck can make it necessary for me to find other supporters but he can't ruin me."

"Could he ruin me?" Honor asked gently. "Here in the city?"

"You!" Clay snapped a glance at her. "You think Marcia'll be skunk enough to take it out on you?"

"I slapped her," said Honor, and her voice was demure and sweet. "She snapped her fingers under my nose and I slapped her face. Hard."

Clay threw back his head and laughed. Hearty, ringing, the sound waved out like a banner so that people in other cars turned to see.

"Oh, brother!" he gasped finally. "That I would have liked to see. That's for the book! That . . . Oh, brother!" And he laughed some more.

He was still laughing when they went into a coffee shop for breakfast. Honor found she liked him better than she ever had before.

She was fifteen minutes late getting

to the office that morning and, going up in the elevator, she remembered what she had decided to do the night before when her mind had been on the question David had asked her, and not on the mess she got into with Marcia. She thought about David and his question now, and it was still on her mind when Bill Frayne buzzed for her. She went into his office with her book snapped open and her pencils sharpened.

Bill looked at her and his eyes were kindly and interested, his smile friendly.

"Well," he said, "how goes the Alder-girling? I hear you're wowing them. I meant to drop around the other night and listen to you, but I got tied up. Think you'll make it?"

"Candidates are always supposed to be rosy with optimism, aren't they?" asked Honor. She put on a brilliant smile. "Sure I'll make it."

He laughed at her and then said, surprisingly, "Something's on your mind. Want to tell me?"

"How on earth did you know?" Honor stared at him.

THE D.A. picked up a pipe and knocked the bowl against a heavy copper ash tray.

"Child"—his eyes twinkled at her—"when you've been in the business of humanity as long as I have you'll know the signs. You've got something on your mind."

"You know David Proctor, don't you?" She hadn't intended to begin like that, and she flushed a little. She hadn't meant to bring David into it at all.

"Sure I know David," the District Attorney said. "Finest man in this city. But he'll never be rich, and he'll never burn the world up. Men like David don't. It's too bad."

"Why don't they?" Honor said. "What's the matter with them?"

Bill Frayne didn't answer for a minute. He was watching his own fingers fill the pipe and tamp the tobacco down. Finally he looked up.

"Honor," he said, "do you know what the truth is?"

"Yes," said Honor.

The D.A. shook his head. "I wish I did," he said.

Honor stared at him. "But—"

"Oh, I don't mean the truth that is an absence of lying. The kind of truth we demand from witnesses in the box. I mean clear complete truth. I mean absolute Right. Do you know what that is? No, nor does anybody else—except hewers-to-the-line like David. All the rest of us struggle with compromise, we do the best we can and call it good, we weigh what we want in the balance with what we'll have to pay for it."

"That's it, sir," said Honor. "That's what's bothering me. Suppose—" She leaned forward, her book slipped from her knee and she didn't even know it. "Suppose I found out that politics was—was corrupt—"

"Politics is famous for it," said the D.A. He was lighting his pipe and he eyed her across the flame.

"I know," said Honor impatiently. "I'm not a baby. But suppose I found out that Senator Blakesley and his friends—"

The D.A. burst out laughing. "David," he said. "That boy's been shooting off his mouth again. Good gravy, he'd have us all angels—and modern tailoring doesn't take account of wings." He laughed again. "So you're afraid you're going to get knee-deep in muck?"

Honor shook her head. "It wasn't so much that," she said. "It was this business of weighing what you wanted against the cost. I've been wondering if my ambition was so strong that I—I wouldn't care about the muck. Would I be willing to wade through for the pot of gold on the other side?"

Bill Frayne puffed on his pipe in silence while he nodded his iron-gray head.

"I see," he said finally. And then he used David's exact words, "A neat question. A very neat question." Another thoughtful puff, then his eyes twinkled at her. "I doubt if you have to settle it however. You'll find Blakesley and his boys as full of human compromises as anyone else—life itself is full of compromises, packed with 'em—but you won't find anything worse. Take my word for it. Feel better? Take a letter."

Honor realized her book had dropped, picked it up and went to work. She felt a lot better.

CHAPTER VI

SECOND ROUND WINNER



MORE than two days went by, and Honor didn't see David. She tried not to think of it. Life was full, life was busy, so why bother about an old impractical idealistic dreamer like David?

But, busy though she was, he kept moving across her mind. And she couldn't help wondering if she wasn't seeing him because he was disgusted with her.

No doubt the mere fact that she had been thoughtful about this question of rigid right and wrong—no compromises—had been enough to finish him. No doubt she should have leapt to her prancing steed and sallied forth to do battle for purity like Sir Galahad.

Sir Galahad—that's who David was like. "His strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure." Except that David didn't seem to get much of anywhere with his pure heart. A struggling lawyer, working so hard he didn't have time for more than a cup of coffee at ten o'clock at night. Scorn curled Honor's lips—but she still wondered why David wasn't around somewhere.

Clay Darrel was very much around. He lunched her and dined her, he took her to meetings, and his dark eyes applauded her, telling her how good she was.

"You'd make an ambitious politician a wonderful wife," he told her one day. "Have you ever thought of it?"

"Not in my waking moments," Honor told him gaily—and she thought again of the dream she'd once had of herself and Clay standing on the steps of the white pillared Governor's Mansion.

But she had been asleep then, and she had been careful not to think of anything so fantastic when she was awake. Now, looking at Clay's dark and ardent eyes, she wondered.

"You might," he said softly, "begin thinking about it." And then he said, "The Governor's Ball is next week."

"I know," said Honor, and waited.

She was going, of course. Senator Blakesley had already spoken of it but his invitation had been conditional.

"If no young and handsome blade speaks for you," he had said, his eyes twinkling, "and you can't do better, Mrs. Blakesley and I will be charmed to be your chaperones."

"That's good of you," Honor had said sweetly, but she had thought of Clay.

She had no way of knowing whether or not he was still seeing Marcia. Actually, with all the time he spent with her, Honor didn't see how he could have had any time left over for Marcia, but you never could tell. The Governor's Ball would settle it. If he asked Honor to go with him it would mean definitely that Marcia was out.

Now Clay looked at her and smiled slowly.

"What will you be wearing to the Ball?" he asked. "I want to know so I'll be sure to send the right flowers."

"Oh," said Honor. And her smile suddenly sparkled. "I'm going to get a new dress," she told him. "I'll let you know."

Two more days went by and no David, and then one evening when she had come straight home from a lonely dinner, because she had no meeting to attend and Clay was in another part of the State on business, there was David. When Honor opened the heavy street door and saw him there in his familiar chair in the foyer waiting for her, she had to stop stock-still a minute because of the sudden jump her heart made.

"David!" she said, and bit her lips because there was a lot more warmth in her tone that she'd had any intention of putting there.

He got up, grinning. "So I've been missed. Well, that does the old heart good. But I didn't stay away on purpose just so you could find out how hollow life was without me. I'm not mean like that. Not really. I've been out of town."

"Oh?" said Honor. She was careful now, for there was no point in giving him any fancy notions. "It's early," she said politely. "Will you come up or is this just a hello and and goodbye?"

David laughed at her. "Don't be silly.

If you hadn't invited me up I'd have taken your key away from you."

So they went up and sat around, drinking coffee and talking.

"If I was a nice man I'd take you out somewhere," David said, "but I'm a selfish beast and I like this better."

Honor said nothing because she liked it better, too, but she wouldn't give him that much satisfaction. You could go to a movie with anybody but it took a special kind of man to keep you on your toes with interest just talking and drinking coffee in your own living room. Then, after a while, they played some records and David turned out all the lamps but one and in the amber glow they sat on the floor and listened.

STILL later, David went out for the makings and he put together a Welsh rarebit that was the best Honor had ever tasted.

"I'd make somebody a darned good husband," he said, as he poured the thick golden mass over crisp toast. "Ever thought of it?"

Honor didn't answer. That was funny. David talked about the good husband he would make, but Clay had talked about the good wife she would make. David thought about how he could help her. Clay thought from the angle of how much help she could be to him. Was that just an accident of speech or could it be characteristic of the two men?

"When I marry it won't be because a man knows how to cook," Honor said.

She knew it was cruel, and she didn't care. She felt as if David was spinning some kind of web around her and she had to knife her way through it somehow.

"I'm getting a new dress for the Governor's Ball," she said. "Any suggestions about the color?" If she'd hoped to surprise him she failed.

"And I suppose Darrel's sending you orchids to match," he said easily. "So why don't you figure the kind of orchids you'd like to wear and get a dress to go with 'em? Be smart. Be different." He grinned at her.

She turned her back, feeling annoyance scald her. He said he loved her—or he made her think he did—and yet

he wasn't jealous. He went out of town and neither told her he was going nor where he had been. He was laughing at her now, silently, and deep inside of him. She knew he was, even though she wasn't looking at him.

She whirled in sudden fury to tell him just what she thought of him—and she whirled right into his arms.

"You little idiot," he said, and kissed her long and hard and thoroughly, so that the world dropped away and she was spinning dizzily and the stars glittered and crackled in her ears and she was too washed with weakness to do anything about it.

"There," David lifted his head and, with his hands firmly on her shoulders, kept her from leaning against him by setting her firmly on her feet. "Let that be a lesson to you," he said. "Don't think nasty things about me ever again, because I don't deserve it, and don't bother to get mad at me because you can't stay mad at me." He grinned at her cheerily and poured coffee into her cup.

"In the past," she said, through her teeth, "I've hated you only part of the time. From here on I hate you all the time."

"That's what you think," said David, and sat down to his Welsh rarebit looking happy.

"Smug," muttered Honor, and made a face at him.

A little while after that he said good night and went off whistling. But while he was waiting for the elevator to come up he called cheerily:

"Have a good time at the Governor's Ball, Beautiful."

Honor slammed the door.

The dress she finally bought, cashing in her entire savings, was a froth of white and silver, and the things it did to her silver-gilt hair and her hazel eyes and her pale clear skin were amazing. Clay sent her white orchids tied with silver ribbon and she wore them against her shoulder so that her warm ivory flesh was their background. When Clay rang her bell and she opened the door for him she heard his gasp.

"Gorgeous!" he said. "I'll bet the Governor will fall right down on his knees."

"Why not flat on his face?" Honor laughed, and handed Clay her wrap.

The capital was seventy miles away, and they were going to have dinner at the Hotel Gaylaway after they got there so, as they went down the walk from the apartment house to Clay's car, sunset was still a rosy flush in the sky. As they drove over the wide ribbon of road that looped the rolling hills, tying together Kelton City with the capital, the dusk blew up from the hollows making the world mauve, then violet, and finally purple, and the stars came out glittering like splintered glass on velvet.

The Hotel Gaylaway was splendidly luxurious, huge and sprawling, crouching in the middle of the city like a mammoth animal with a million lights for eyes. The dinner developed into a young and informal banquet, because everyone who had driven up from Kelton City had come to the hotel to eat.

"But we don't want to team up with a lot of people we see every day, do we?" asked Clay. "Let's get us a cozy table out of the way." He smiled at Honor and his smile seemed to wrap her up tenderly. "You're so beautiful," he murmured, as they were ushered to their table.

HONOR didn't answer. She was sitting down and she had just noticed that, across the room, Marcia stood in the doorway with her father.

"Look— isn't she beautiful?" Honor said.

Clay turned. "Yes—beautiful," he said shortly. And his mouth was suddenly tight as with dislike.

At that instant Marcia, as if their eyes had magnetized her, looked across at them. She was indeed beautiful. Ice-green satin wrapped her in luscious folds that did everything in the world for her figure and her alabaster skin and her glowing hair. Why a girl as gorgeous as that had to come to a thing like this with her father was more than Honor could see.

"Look!" she said to Clay. "Or rather, don't look. But they're coming this way."

They were indeed coming that way. They took the table next to Honor's

and Clay's table and so close that Marcia's back was a scant yard from Clay's shoulders.

"Exciting crowd, isn't it, Dad?" asked Marcia and her voice carried with crystalline clarity.

Dan Polluck probably said something but his tone, low and courteous, was only a murmur.

"Would you like to change tables?" Clay said, his tone just as low.

Honor laughed. "Why should I? She's not poison."

Marcia's clear voice sailed as if it had silver wings.

"You know David Proctor, Dad. I'm sure you do. He's the man that always takes Honor Winslow out when all her regular swains think she's safe in bed. They bring her home and say good-night, and then it's David's field day."

There was a crash as Clay's chair went over and the jar of the stride that took him to Marcia rattled the china.

"You little—"

"You're talking to my daughter, Darrel." Dan Polluck's voice was still quiet, but his eyes were steel.

"I'm sorry she's your daughter, Dan. I'm sorry any decent man on earth is connected with her." His dark eyes were pools of flame—and Marcia laughed up into them lightly.

"Honor," she called, "you'd better come here and straighten out this slight misunderstanding. I'm being called names that you know I don't deserve."

Honor rose quickly, her chin high. She moved over to the other table and stood beside Clay.

"Clay doesn't seem to believe that you go out with David Proctor."

"I do," said Honor.

"Rather late too, isn't it, when you go playing?"

"And what time is the curfew rung in Kelton City?" asked Honor, with a sweet smile.

Dan Polluck let out an appreciative guffaw which he tried immediately to turn into a cough and Clay grinned.

"Really, Miss Polluck," Honor went on, encouraged, "I'd no idea I was important enough to you to warrant the expense of a private detective—which you must have had because spying on me yourself would have been too disgrace-

fully humiliating. Shall we go back to our table, Clay?"

They went back and as Honor sat down she heard Dan Polluck say:

"Don't go into tears now, Marcia. You brought it on yourself."

"You wait!" Marcia said, the tears bubbling through the words. I'll get her if it's the last—"

"Do you want to move now?" asked Clay.

"Certainly not," said Honor.

She set her mind to enjoying the dinner. But it wasn't easy. Marcia's laugh and her lilting voice were like a bitter sauce on everything she ate. Clay, of course, made no mention of David nor of anything Marcia had said, and Honor made up her mind to explain it all as soon as she could without feeling that Marcia was practically leaning over her shoulder listening.

CHAPTER VII

GOVERNOR'S BALL



IN the Governor's Mansion the ball-room was a splendid shining room that stretched the full length of the house on the third floor. The mirrored walls made the space appear to be far more vast than it

actually was and, on and on into infinity, it reflected the dancers.

At either end on gaily draped platforms orchestras played in turn so that the music never stopped. The room was crowded, the reception room, the drawing rooms, the library downstairs was crowded. The great from all over the State had come to do honor to the Governor.

Honor dived into the gaiety and brilliance as a silver fish might dive into home waters. This was life as it should be lived. This was gorgeous and wonderful. This was the kind of things she would always have from now on and she would never, never let it go.

Clay, dancing and holding her as if he could never hold her close enough, said:

"You're part of this. You're perfect. Oh, you darling!" And he whirled her around until her skirts were a silver and white cloud around her and her face was flushed like dawn.

He took her to present her to the Governor, a white-haired jovial man with eyes like blue frost.

"Honor Winslow, sir," Clay said. "She's running—"

"I know all about it," said Everett Folsom. "Blakesley wore my ears out singing her praises. She's beautiful, she's eloquent, she's smart. We're lucky men to be living in the same world you are in, Miss Winslow."

"It has always been a good world," said Honor. "Sometimes Man gets too much for it, but the world gets over it."

The Governor threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"Blakesley didn't overrate you at all, Miss Winslow. Not one little bit." Then he turned to Clay, slapping him on the shoulder. "Why don't you marry her, man?" he asked. "Don't you know a good thing when you see it?"

"I certainly do," said Clay and, with murmured excuses, he danced off again with Honor.

In the black night just before dawn they were eating scrambled eggs and tiny sausages. By the time everyone was at last trailing in groups and crowds down the wide white steps, waiting for their cars, talking and laughing as if this were only the bright beginning of the evening, it was full dawn, with the sky trailing banners of rose and jade and gold. And all the world that hadn't been to the Governor's Ball was waking up for another day.

"Consider yourselves my children for the moment and come with me," Senator Blakesley said. "Driving home after being up all night is impossible. I have taken a suite at the Gaylaway and you will share it."

"That's kind of you, sir," Honor said. "But I couldn't sleep. I'm too excited."

"I have an appointment at ten which I must keep," Clay said. "Thank you just the same, sir."

It was full day by the time they left the capital and the sun was a blaze of

gold on the State House dome. Back in Kelton City after a swift drive Honor, showering and dressing in a fine frenzy, was only about ten minutes late at the office.

She was typing up the batch of letters Bill Frayne had dictated, and the hands of the clock were climbing toward twelve when the door opened and David walked in.

"Well!" She dropped her hands to her lap and looked at him. "And to what am I indebted for this unexpected call? Or did you come to see the boss? You don't usually publicize your sentiments by coming to the office. You usually skulk in a big chair in my foyer."

"Ha!" said David. "So some of your little pals have been pointing that out to you. Well, well."

Honor felt her cheeks go hot. "You're very bright," she said. And he was. Few people would have caught on so quickly.

He looked at her thoughtfully for a minute.

"Good thing I dropped by," he said then. "I had a kind of hunch it was an idea to stop in, but I thought it was the meaner side of my nature wanting to see what you looked like after a night out."

Honor nodded.

"A complete night out. My fair head has yet to touch a pillow. Well—how do I look?"

"Beautiful, drat it," said David. "Nobody'd ever guess. Now me, when I lose sleep, I look like the wrath of heaven."

"I know," said Honor. "I've seen you. Remember? I met you after seventy-two hours of doing everything but sleep. Now go along. You've seen me and I'm not only beautiful, I'm busy."

"Modest child," said David. "And bossy. But I'm not going away. I'm going to wait here till your lunch hour strikes and I'm going to take you to lunch."

HONOR thought a second. Blakesley was still sleeping in his suite in the Gaylaway, and Clay was tied up with that appointment so she might as well.

"Of course don't take me up on this luncheon thing if you have anything else to do," David said, with that gift for reading her mind that he always seemed to have, he grinned as if he really thought he had said something funny.

"I remember now—I hate you," Honor said. "It had actually slipped my mind for a minute."

"You sweet thing," David said, and sat down, opening a newspaper he fished from his pocket. "Whenever you're ready, Dream Girl, little David will leap to do your bidding."

He made a lot of noise rustling his paper.

"Oh, for heaven's sake!" said Honor. "I'll go now."

"Anything to be rid of me." David grinned happily. "That's what I figured on."

DAVID took her to the same grill they had gone to before, where good honest hard-working men were lined up at the bar in front shouting their news and drinking their beer.

"My friends," said David, waving a hand at them and, actually, half of them returned the wave and added big friendly grins. "Good men, wonderful men. I like 'em."

Honor thought of the brilliance of the Governor's Ball and the beauty and the wealth and the rich comfort.

"I don't see why being poor should make a man more honest than being rich," she said. "The Governor's honest and he has clean fingernails and everything."

David grinned at her. "She gets her back right up and spits, doesn't she?" he asked conversationally. "Sure, the Governor's honest, but he's way up there crowned with success and a sunken pool and chicken whenever he wants it. He doesn't need my help. These lads do. See the difference?"

Honor saw, but she wanted to argue about it.

"So what are you going to do with them? Kill a chicken and save your pennies for cement for their sunken pool?"

David looked at her and he didn't laugh.

"Sunday's coming up," he said instead. "Darrel hasn't had a chance to date you yet, so suppose I do it? How about driving out somewhere and doing something?"

"Sounds thrilling," said Honor, but she knew she would go.

WHEN Clay found that she was dated for Sunday he was flatteringly upset about it.

"I'd made plans for Sunday," he said, and his eyes got dark.

"Won't they keep?" asked Honor.

He didn't answer; he just thrust his hands into his pockets and looked gloomy. They were in her apartment where he had come to pick her up and take her to a big Saturday night barbecue and dance that the Elks were giving.

Know people, be seen, get acquainted, make friends Blakesley had told her, and she was doing her best.

She watched Clay as he crossed the living room to stare out the window.

"David Proctor, I suppose," he guessed bitterly.

For some reason Honor was suddenly annoyed.

"Yes, it's David Proctor," she snapped. "And have you any objection? Does the party dictate my friends as well as take over all my waking hours?"

"So that's the reason he hangs around at off hours? Because that's the only time you can give him? And you can't give him up?"

"Look here," said Honor. She whisked across the living room and yanked him around so that he faced her. "I don't like your tone and the things you say. David is my friend, and he's going to stay my friend, and if you don't like it that's just pretty too bad. I like it, and I'm the one to be pleased."

She stopped and pulled in a deep angry breath. She was abruptly surprised at herself. Imagine flying to David's defense like that! What had got into her? And defending him to Clay of all people! Actually quarreling with Clay about him.

Was she crazy?

She opened her mouth to apologize,

to clear it up, to do something and quick.

But Clay was ahead of her, his tone smooth and organ-like again.

"I'm sorry, Honor." His hands reached for hers and held them. "I was completely beyond any right of friendship and I apologize. Of course no one is going to dictate what friends you choose. After all, we don't run dictatorships in this country."

"That's what I thought," said Honor. . . .

SUNDAY was a beautiful, crisp, blue and gold late October day. Honor saw the blue sky and the sailing puffs of cloud as she opened her eyes in the morning and she felt the warm blanket of gold sunlight lying in a band across her knees. The phone bell was a-jangle in her ears. Lazily she rolled over and picked up the instrument from its cradle.

"I trust you're awake and dressed," said David's voice. "Because I'm accompanied by sausages and eggs and nice fresh rolls. We're all coming to breakfast and all we need is coffee."

"You'll get your coffee," said Honor. "And don't come for ten minutes."

At the end of ten minutes, as if she had waved a wand, she was showered and dressed, a comb run through her pale shining hair and her nose delicately powdered.

"You're wonderful," said David as he came in. "I forgot to mention that over the phone just now."

"Thanks," said Honor. "You're just hungry, and you figure if you flatter me enough you'll get your food just that much quicker."

"How did you guess?" asked David. His grin was like an open fire.

They had a gorgeous day. They drove through air that was like wine, and they watched the colors change on the rolling hills. Scarlet and gold, copper and jade and crimson, the trees were like a great Paisley shawl thrown over everything.

They lunched at an inn where the glory was spread lavishly all around them, and they drove back to the city with the afternoon sunlight softened by the smoky October haze.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SIXTY-FOUR-DOLLAR QUESTION



WHEN Honor and David had come out of the city that morning they had been driving west, but they had made a semi-circle around it, so that when they returned they came in on Forty-six on the east side of town.

"Ugh," said Honor. "Slums."

"Ugh," said David. "You're a snob."

"I am not," said Honor indignantly. "I just don't like muck and filth and narrow streets crawling with children. Do you like them—the slums, I mean? Of course I like children."

"No, I don't like slums," said David. "So I'm doing something about them. They'll go on forever if somebody doesn't take the bit in his teeth and improve matters. This city is way behind in its slum clearance projects. And it's going to get farther behind."

"Why?" asked Honor.

David didn't answer. He slid the car to the curb and pointed.

Across the street was a beautiful new apartment house, its yellow brick looking scrubbed and clean in the afternoon sunlight, and its awnings looking like bright patches of green grass.

"Look at it," said David.

"Well?" said Honor. "What are you fussing about? There's a nice place for your slummers to live. It's clean and neat and I'll bet it has hardwood floors and pretty bathtubs and everthing."

"It has," said David. "And it takes care of about one-twentieth of the people who need taking care of." He turned and looked at her, and his eyes held an odd expression. "The plan was to put up a dozen more buildings like this, a regular housing project with lawns and paths and benches and playgrounds. All this land between here and the river and as far up as Fortescue Street was to have been bought, the tenements on it were to be torn down and houses like this built. The money to buy the land is in the bank along with the money for building."

"Well then," said Honor, "what's the matter? Why aren't you happy?"

David smiled and it wasn't a smile. It was just a curling of his mouth, bitter and hurt.

"Because the owners of the land have decided they won't sell. They're going to let the city have it for a park. They say a park will beautify the whole river front and will make us a very, very pretty city."

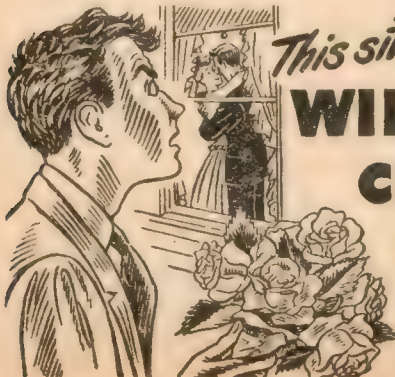
Honor turned to David quickly, her eyes wide.

"But what's going to happen to the people living in the tenements? If the tenements are torn down for the park and no new buildings are put up for the people to live in, what are they going to do?"

"That," said David, "is the sixty-four-dollar question. Your guess is just as good as mine." He jabbed the starter, shifted the gears and rolled the car away from the curb.

"Are there any other houses they can move to?" Honor said.

[Turn page]



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"Is there an extra house anywhere that anybody can move to?" David said. "Maybe three, maybe six houses advertised for rent any day you look in the paper, and the rents run from sixty to a hundred and fifty dollars a month. You think these people can play that kind of game?"

"But what are they going to do?"

David didn't answer that one and the question hung in the air like a rocket that is sizzling and spitting but not yet exploding. . . .

Honor had been home for an hour when, suddenly, she pulled herself together. Why was she getting all hot and bothered about a bunch of poor people who weren't smart enough to get out of the slums? That was the kind of nonsense her father had always wasted his time on and broken his heart about.

Was she going to follow in his footsteps? She certainly was *not*. She had decided that when she was a little girl, hardly big enough to decide anything, but just big enough to know what she wanted. And she wasn't going to change her mind now. She would forget David had ever shown her the tenements or told her about the plans for a park. She would forget the whole thing.

The next day Blakesley walked into her office just as she was putting on her hat to go out for luncheon.

"I'm going to take you to the Club," he announced. "You can't let people forget what you look like and how smart you are. You haven't been to the Club in a week. I don't know where Clay Darrel takes you to lunch—probably over to the Omar Room so he can dance with you. The fool ought to know you'll never win an election that way. And do you know how near we are to that first-Tuesday-after-the-first-Monday-in-November?"

"Two weeks from tomorrow," said Honor. "See? I know my lesson."

"Humph!" snorted the old Senator. "Knowing everything in the world won't do you any good if you don't get around and let people see you. Come along."

HONOR went meekly, and made a great effort to be just as brilliant and politically smart as the Senator wanted her to be. It was over their

coffee that he nodded his head toward the other end of the room.

"Man down there looks like David Proctor. Except that it isn't David, because he'd sooner run barefoot through purgatory than cross the threshold of this Club."

"Why?" asked Honor. "What's David got against the poor Club?"

The Senator shrugged heavy shoulders. "Who knows?" he said. "He just doesn't like the cut of our jib. Says real unkind things about us sometimes. That's why it might be just as well if you weren't seen around with him. Folks might not understand, and think you were mugwumping. Folks are funny—when they vote for a person they want to be sure they're voting for the side they want in. They don't want to think that maybe the person they put in office will slip and slide from one side to the other after he gets in. Understand?"

"Yes, I understand," said Honor. She looked at him and he pinned her down carefully.

"So you won't be seen around any more with David Proctor?" he asked.

Honor realized suddenly that this had been the whole purpose of the luncheon and that the other talk, while true enough, had been merely camouflage. She also realized a couple of other things. The Senator and his friends, his party, objected to David for the same reasons she herself quarreled and argued with David all the time. He, with his ideals and his one-track mind, got in their hair just the way he got in hers.

Also this was the moment of her choice. Was she going David's way—and her father's—or was she going the way of success and money and glory that, over and over again, she had chosen?

"Of course I won't see David if you advise against it," she said quietly. "At least I won't see him until election is over."

"You'd do better not to see him at all," Blakesley mumbled.

But Honor hardly heard him. She was feeling oddly sick as if, with her own hands, she had killed something she loved. And that, of course, was silly.

David was really nothing to her but an annoying pain in the neck. She would get along beautifully without him, and she would forget him—but fast.

She thought of this, the necessity for forgetting David, when Clay called up during the afternoon. She must see more of Clay even than she had been doing. Fill up her life, fill up her time so that there wouldn't be even a second in which she could think. Keep herself so busy that she would tumble into bed at night too exhausted even to think. That was what she would do.

"It's been too long," Clay said. "Forty-one hours since I've seen you. I can't stand it."

"Can't you?" asked Honor, and made her voice sound amused.

"I hate to call you when you're in the office, but I couldn't help it. I'm going to pick you up at six-thirty, and I'm not going to share you with anybody."

"The Senator won't like that," Honor said. "He says he won't let you see me any more if all we do is go off dancing somewhere. I'm supposed to glitter in the public eye so they'll know what they're voting for. And I'm speaking at three meetings tonight. We only have two more weeks, and from now on I've got to zing."

"All right," said Clay. "I'll chauffeur you around to your meetings, and I'll beat my hands raw applauding. After that I'm going to drive you out somewhere and talk to you."

"Are you?" asked Honor gently, and hung up.

She knew, of course, what he was going to talk to her about. And she knew, definitely, what she was going to tell him.

She wore a suit, black and trim and smart, with crisp ruffles of white lace at her throat and wrists, and a little black hat that had cost three times too much, but was worth every cent of it.

"There's never been anyone like you," Clay said when he saw her.

She knew he almost kissed her, but had decided to wait until just the right moment that would come later. Honor could see his thoughts as clearly as if there had been words in running lighted letters across his forehead.

The three meetings where Honor spoke and was applauded until the rafters rang, were all blazing successes. People banged their hands when she went up on the platform and they stamped their feet when she came down. They laughed when she wanted them to, and they stopped her with their shouts of enthusiasm when she made them. They were sitting, all the hundreds of them, right in the palm of her hand and it was heady and exciting and more fun than she had ever had before.

"The pot is yours, every nickel in it," Clay said. "You're the Senator's girl through and through, and they know it."

"What do you mean, the Senator's girl?" Honor said.

CLAY laughed. He was happy over all this enthusiasm and his face showed it. The glow made him even more handsome than usual.

"Nothing personal intended," he said. "Mrs. Blakesley will never be jealous of you, so don't get your back up. All I meant was that the Senator's fathered you the way he has all the rest of us. And you show your training. We're lucky people to have fallen on such soft ground."

Honor thought that over in the next few minutes as they drove to the next meeting that was in a public school farther down town. She didn't like the idea of reciting somebody else's opinions. A parrot could do that.

And was that, actually, all she was doing? Had she, out of admiration for the Senator and the feeling that he knew so much more about politics than she did, come to be nothing but a mouth-piece? If so, she would have to stop it. She would have to go at this thing from another angle.

But if she did, would Blakesley like it? Maybe, if she did, she would lose her place in the sun. And there, she thought as she walked up the aisle to the platform, was the old question. How much was this place in the sun worth to her? How much would she be willing to sacrifice to keep it?

She found her place on the platform and sat down, and in that second she saw David, his curly head rising above everybody else, his twinkling blue eyes

laughing at her. David had come to hear her speak!

He had never come before. For some reason he had always avoided the meetings where she was though she knew he was active at other meetings. But anyhow, whatever reason he might have had for not coming to hear her before, there he was now and she must do her best for him.

For a swift, fleeting second she thought of this business of her parroting Blakesley's ideas and principles, but it was too late to do anything about it now. You couldn't make a study of a city's political pattern and formulate your own platform and build a new speech all in the time it was taking the chairman to make his introduction. So all she could do was to repeat the things she had said at the other two meetings, and put into it all the sweeping fire that had pulled the other crowds off their feet.

She did it and she did a good job, but the crowd was not with her, it was not sitting in the palm of her hand, as the other crowds had been. She did her best but she couldn't manipulate it. She felt them pulling against her, all except a scattered few—maybe a third—who were tagging along after her.

It was the first time she had ever had her audience go sour and it was terrible. It made her feel as if she had been beaten with a cudgel. She came down from the platform hearing the mumblings and feeling the scorn all around her as clearly as if they had been the boos and hisses that the crowd would have given her if she had been a man instead of a good-looking girl.

Clay was waiting for her at the door, and she wanted more than anything else to get to him. To feel his sympathy and his approbation, to hear his voice, warm and congratulating because, no matter what the crowd thought, Clay would think she was good. So, as fast as she could, hurrying and pushing her way through the massed people, she headed for him.

And then, suddenly, she was looking up into David's eyes. He had reached her in the crowd, he was blocking her way and his eyes were blue fire.

"You've done it, haven't you?" The

words lashed at her like leather thongs. "You've learned it word for word and you spout it like a phonograph record. You—" He stopped as if the words he had been going to say had burned his throat, choking him. And then he said, "Your father would be proud of you!"

He let her go, standing aside, and almost pushing her on her way.

Honor went, stumbling a little, and finally she was safe in Clay's beautiful long convertible and she was sitting deep in the leather seat, as if she would like to hide in it.

"Don't take it so hard, Beautiful," Clay said. "You've got to get used to getting the rough with the smooth. Sometimes you get hecklers that drive you to a killing rage, sometimes you get what you got tonight. It's all part of the game. Cheer up."

Honor tried to cheer up, but Clay hadn't seen David's eyes, he hadn't heard David's bitter lashing words. So Clay didn't really know what he was talking about.

"Which would you like to do to take your mind off things?" he said. "Drive out Orrington way and talk it out of your system or go to the Country Club? There's a dance on tonight."

CHAPTER IX

PLACE IN THE SUN



HONOR thought for a minute. She wanted to talk. She wanted to ask questions and get at the truth of all that was bothering her. But it wouldn't do any good to ask Clay. He would just tell her . . .

Well, what would he tell her?

"Don't let this thing tonight weigh you down," Clay said. "I know what's bothering you. It's bothered all of us at one time or another in the beginning. When we hear the enemy call us names we always wonder if the names could be true names and if we deserve them. But get this through your head early. Both sides call names."

"Maybe a little of it's true. But it's true for both sides. Nobody's perfect,

and anybody can pick out a flaw here and there and exaggerate it and make it into a name-calling holiday. All right—so if both sides can call names with equal truth, then the smart thing to do is pick on the side that'll win the most times and be the most successful. And you're on that side, so quit worrying."

Honor laughed a little and relaxed. Of course it was true. Take any great man who had ever lived. He had been deviled with criticism by his enemies, heckled by the press. But that didn't prove he was really wrong, did it? It just proved he was strong so he had made himself strong enemies. Of course.

And, Honor thought firmly, David was a fool. He just hadn't been able to make the grade to success here in Kelton City, so he was fighting the success he couldn't be taken into. David was being childish. It was just sour grapes.

She and Clay drove out the Orrington road and the cool air, the stars, and the smooth speed of the car ironed out all Honor's unhappiness.

"I'm going the right way," she thought. "I know I am. And David, poor David—"

"Darling," said Clay, "will you marry me?"

"Wh-what?" asked Honor and sat up straight to stare at him.

He slid the car to the side of the road and as it stopped the sweet night noises and odors drifted up.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't intend it to be abrupt like that." He laughed a little. "I've been planning for days what I'd say to you. I've even rehearsed it—with gestures. And then . . . Well, the sight of you sitting there so slumped down and upset and the feeling I had that you were using a lot of courage to pull yourself together, the words just came out."

Honor sat still. So it had come as she had known it would. And he sounded tender and embarrassed and like a little boy. It moved her, and made her feel tender, too.

"Honor," he said again, "will you marry me? I love you very much." Straightforward and simple and deeply sincere.

Honor moved a little so that she faced him, and so that her eyes could meet

his tender ones.

"Yes, Clay," she said gently. "I'll marry you."

Of course she had known he was going to kiss her but even knowing it she felt a small shock of surprise. His lips were eager and gentle, moving against hers and she thought when the instant's surprise left her, "This is all right, this is fine, this will work out beautifully." And then, apparently a long time later because Honor had thought a good many other things, Clay stopped kissing her and lifted his head.

"Beautiful—wonderful," he whispered, "and mine. Will you marry me soon, darling?"

"I'll have to think," said Honor. And then she said, "How can I marry you if I win the election? I'll be here and you'll be in the capital."

Clay laughed softly. "We'll arrange it, Lovely," he said. "We can arrange anything. Marry me soon."

But Honor wouldn't promise. Even when he kissed her again and again and again she wouldn't promise. Finally he held her away from him.

"You don't love me," he accused her. She laughed softly. "If I didn't love

you," she said, "why would I be marrying you?" And she thought, "I'll be able soon to tell him in so many words that I love him. It's just because it's new and I haven't got used to the idea yet that the words won't come."

But Clay seemed content with her answer.

"Let's go back to the Country Club now," he said, "and tell everybody we meet that you're going to marry me."

"The Country Club—tonight?" said Honor, and felt dismayed.

But Clay insisted, so they went.

"I want everybody to know that you belong to me," he said, and as he drove he kept one hand covering hers.

THE Country Club was a blaze of light and the minute they turned in through the stone gate posts they could hear the music, sweet and pulsing, pouring out from the wide veranda, glassed-in now against the sharp October night.

"Clay," Honor said, "I'm not dressed for a party. Let's not go in."

"Of course we'll go in! And every-

body there will know why you're not dressed for a party because I'll tell them. You've been out making a big name for yourself on the speaker's platform. You've been hauling in the votes. You're a smart gal."

As she got out of the car he lifted her a little and kissed her right under the bright moon of the entrance light.

"Well!" said a voice, and there was Marcia Polluck, her copper hair a sheen of glory, her green eyes clear and hard.

Clay looked up as she stood at the top of the steps, and he smiled broadly.

"She's going to marry me," he announced. "Isn't it wonderful?"

"Marvelous," said Marcia, and spat out the word as if she were spitting out her teeth.

Clay laughed happily and the sound must have been gall and wormwood to the girl on the steps.

"Come on, darling," he said to Honor and, with his arm around her, he led her through the doorway.

It was late, of course, but before one dance was over the news had spread like tinder fire. The instant Clay and Honor stopped dancing they were surrounded. Congratulations, laughter, surprise, astonishment and an all-round pleasure sparkled through the air as thick as confetti.

The next dance was the last and Clay danced it slowly, his cheek against Honor's soft hair and Honor thought, "'Home Sweet Home.' Some day after they play this I'll be going home with Clay, to our home." She couldn't imagine it. She couldn't for the life of her make it seem real. . . .

Honor awoke the next morning to the warm, soft floating emptiness that comes in that instant between waking to the world again and remembering what the waking means. In that instant she smiled sleepily and then, like soldiers marching to surround her, facts came to confront her. Simple things like the necessity of getting up and showering and fixing breakfast. Something not so simple like the way David had looked at her the night before.

So she had lost David. She would have lost him anyway, she thought dully, because of what Blakesley had said. So, really, what difference did that make?

But even so, David's eyes were there with her as if he were still looking at her and thinking dreadful things, and it gave her a dull heavy feeling as if she had swallowed lead.

Then, last, she remembered Clay. She was going to marry him and everybody was happy about it. That was nice. It would guarantee her a successful life. That was what she wanted, wasn't it? She ought to get right up and dance and sing.

She got right up, but she didn't dance and she couldn't think of anything much to sing, so she dressed quietly and then, because the silence seemed to press on her, she went out for her breakfast.

It was there, while she was drinking her orange juice, that she flipped open the newspaper she had bought and saw the headline. Three inches high it blared out the words and left nobody in any doubt.

BLAKESLEY MILKING CITY FUNDS Robs Slum Poor of Housing Investigation Threatened

Honor, her eyes big, her hands shaking a little, read the story. It was the land David had pointed out to her that Sunday, the land now covered with tenements which, instead of being torn down in order to build a housing project, were going to be torn down for a park for the city.

And the land, it seemed, was owned by Senator Blakesley and Clay Darrel and a couple of their friends. The deal was—and proof was offered to anyone wishing it—that these landowners had been willing to sell the property originally to the corporation interested in building the housing project. Then they had hatched a better idea. They would sell it to the city for a park and, inasmuch as they had their hands up to the elbows in the city funds, they could pay themselves any kind of a fancy sum the traffic would bear.

The sum they had modestly settled for would leave all of them close to millionaires. The triple five-inch paragraphs boxed in the center of the front page ended as they had begun by offering proof and demanding an investigation.

HONOR finished reading it in a blaze of fury. She ripped the paper in half, forgot her breakfast, grabbed her bag, flung down a dollar bill, and tore for the door. She knew just who to go to and she was going as fast as she could.

David's office was five blocks away and she ran, feeling crazily that it was faster than waiting for a taxi. It was a quarter of nine and she was breathless when she got there. It was a three-story walk-up office building filled with other struggling lawyers and a struggling doctor or two. Honor pounded up the stairs, her fists hammering the rail.

When she stood outside the door that said "David Proctor, Attorney at Law" in black letters on its ground-glass square, she stopped. Maybe this was too early for David. Maybe he hadn't come. But she could have saved her worry. When she touched the handle the door swung in easily and there he was, his head bent, his eyes concentrated, his fingers whisking with professional skill over typewriter keys.

"I suppose you're concocting more lies." Honor said, her voice scorching.

"Lies?" David looked up. "Oh, it's you." He eyed her for a minute and his face was completely dead pan. Then he said flatly, "No, I'm not concocting lies. I don't tell lies."

He left it there for her to do what she wanted to with it. He wasn't going to help her a bit.

In the steady gaze of his clear blue eyes Honor found she didn't know what to do. Abruptly she wished she hadn't come. She wished she had left it to Clay to settle. After all, Clay was one of the men accused. She shifted her weight from one foot to the other like a schoolgirl and that brought all her anger back again in a hot, choking flood.

"You wrote that mess of lies in the paper, didn't you?" she demanded.

"Technically, no," said David. "I'm no reporter."

"But you're in back of it, aren't you? You gave out these filthy facts and"—the idea exploded in her mind like a Catherine wheel—"I know why you did it!"

"You do?" David sounded politely interested and she clenched her fists to

keep from beating at him. "Can you tell me what my reason is?"

She smiled but it was only a grimace that curled her lips.

"You found out late last night when it got out that I'm going to marry Clay Darrel, and this is the way y-you h-humiliate me!"

David didn't say anything for a moment. Then, slowly, he shook his head.

"And to think that for so long I thought I loved you." His tone was wondering. "I even dreamed of marrying you, a girl with an evil, low mind who can accuse me of a thing like that. For the record"—his tone was gentle—"I'd like to state that I hadn't the remotest notion you'd be fool enough to get yourself tied up with Darrel. And off the record"—his voice roughed suddenly and he stood over his typewriter, tall and broad-shouldered, looking abruptly like an avenging god. "I want to say that I'd like to horsewhip you along with all your little thieving pals. Now get out of here." He leaned toward her and his eyes were volcanoes. "Get out of here fast."

He didn't raise his voice. He didn't have to. His words were rocks and he was throwing them at her.

CHAPTER X

POLITICIAN'S WIFE



GOING out the door, Honor went down the corridor and down the stairs. She walked up the street and she didn't know where she was going. It was nine o'clock and she should be in her own office, but she couldn't go there. Not with David's eyes blazing and burning with scorn clinging to her sight, not with David's words rolling in her ears like ominous, terrible thunder.

Once he had loved her, but he didn't any more. Once he had dreamed of marrying her, but he never would again. She forgot Clay in that moment, forgot that he was the man she must love and honor and obey till death did them part.

She forgot everything but David, and she walked the pavements, rolling up the blocks, remembering his words, seeing his face.

And then, suddenly, she realized what she was doing. A newsboy's raucous voice yelling in her ear broke through to her.

"Read about the Senators!" shouted the newsboy. "Here y'are. All the latest about the thievin' Senators. Get a paper! Read it all! Here y'are."

Honor stared at him as if waking out of a sleep. Had she been crazy? Walking the streets because David had scolded her. How idiotic. Of course he had scolded her. He was mad because she had gone over to the other side so definitely.

Well, she *had* gone over to the other side, and right this minute she ought to be with her friends, defending them against this ridiculous charge that David had brought against them. Of course it wasn't true. Senator Blakesley wouldn't have a finger in such a sticky pie. And she had better hurry up and do what she should have done in the beginning instead of wasting time running to David.

Suddenly she was in as much of a hurry as she had been earlier, and her hurry was so apparent that a cruising cab slid to the curb.

"Where to, lady?" asked the driver. He was so sure she needed his cab.

"Senator Blakesley's home," said Honor.

The driver cocked a canny eye at her.

"You going to call 'em names?" asked the driver. But it was a rhetorical question, and he waited for no answer. "They've kicked up a sweet mess, that bunch of politicians, haven't they?" he asked. And this time he did wait for an answer.

Honor felt her breath catch. "You mean you believe it?" Her tone was sharp as if it had a pain in it.

The driver grinned. "This is a funny world we live in, miss," he observed. "Most anything can happen."

"But—but"—Honor fumbled for words—"you mustn't believe it! Nobody must believe it. It's just a ghastly story that the press have whipped up because election is only eight days away

and . . . Why, you know any story can make the papers when election is so close. This is just—"

"Here you are, lady. Senator Blakesley's home like you said." He looked at her as she found change for him. "You're Miss Winslow, aren't you? Running for alderman, on the Senator's ticket."

"The Senator hasn't got a ticket," snapped Honor. "He's been retired for years."

"That's what you think," said the driver and, with one movement, he slammed the door of his cab and slid out from the curb.

Honor, almost as angry at the cabby as she had been at David, ran up the wide white steps and between the fat tall columns and rang the Blakesley's front door bell.

The butler opened the door and smiled when he saw her.

"Is the Senator at home, Ulysses? I'd like to see him."

"They're expecting you, Miss Winslow. I know, because the Senator has had me telephone all around trying to find you. They're in the library."

"They?" repeated Honor. "Who?"

"Oh, several people. Mr. Darrel, for one. You can go right in." He smiled faintly, not losing his dignity. "I've heard the news," he said, his tone confidential. "May I offer wishes for your great happiness?"

"Hap. . . Oh, yes. You mean you've heard that I'm going to marry Mr. Darrel. Well, thank you, Ulysses." She smiled faintly. "I hope I'll be happy too."

Leaving the butler looking a bit puzzled, she went on across the wide hallway, past the curving, gracious stairway to the large white door that opened into the library. Honor opened it and stood still on the threshold.

THE room seemed full of people though, actually, there weren't more than a dozen, and Matilda Gregson was the only other woman. Senator Blakesley was standing in front of the tall stone fireplace, his hands behind his back, his voice rolling out across the rich beautiful room.

"—is the best plan. It's the only

plan that I can see. Honor is young and looks lovely—”

“And innocent,” said a voice somewhere, and there was a titter of amusement.

“—and she’ll do it convincingly.” He turned to pace restlessly. “Where on earth is the girl?” he grumbled. “Ulysses better call Bill’s office again.” He turned to reach for the bell pull and saw Honor standing at the door. “Well! It’s about time. Come in here, child.”

Honor went in, walking slowly. She felt sick, and she felt as if something slimy were closing in on her. She had to push herself through thickening walls to move.

“I’ve seen the papers,” she said inanely.

Blakesley laughed, but it didn’t have the usual warm rich ring.

“So have we all seen the papers,” he said. “And that’s what we’re here for—to find a loophole and use it.”

“Why don’t you just deny it?” asked Honor, and realized that her skin was suddenly icy cold and that, inwardly, she was shaking like a wind-blown field of wheat.

Blakesley laughed. It was a short, unpleasant sound.

“Deny it,” he said. “The child wants us to deny it. In the face of all that proof she wants us to deny it. Wouldn’t we look like monkeys?”

Somebody started to laugh, and Blakesley laughed, and in a minute the laughter was rolling everywhere, up along the high ceiling, bouncing against the hangings and the oil paintings and the tapestries on the wall and scuttling under the deep chairs and the davenport and the table.

Laughter. They were laughing at Honor and her sweetly innocent and fantastic notion that they should deny the accusation of theft and dishonesty that had been leveled at them. It was that funny. The very thought of denying their guilt was uproarious.

Honor stood there—and she knew. So this was the price you paid for rooms like this one in which she stood in the doorway. You gained wealth and outward honor and you were chauffeur-driven in shining limousines because you closed your eyes to honesty and

cheated poor people out of the roofs over their heads.

The laughter had partially died, and suddenly Honor was shouting above it.

“So you did it! You lied and you cheated and you stole, and you can’t deny it because the proof is so strong you’d all look like monkeys! Well, you *are* monkeys! Monkeys cheat and steal and they have so little sense that all they can do is to imitate other animals which requires no brains. So you’re monkeys. Because intelligent people know they can’t away with the kind of murder you’re trying to get away with. And if you think I’m going to help you—‘Get Honor to do it because she’s young and pretty and innocent!’—you’re crazy. I wouldn’t help you with one whispered word!”

She whirled to the door—and nearly threw herself into Clay’s arms.

“Darling, you’re upset,” he said gently. “Come along. I’ll take you home and stay with you till you feel better.” She saw the quick glance he shot at Blakesley.

Fresh anger burned through her. So Clay thought he could work her around to their point of view with a few eager kisses, a little lovemaking rich with well-chosen, burningly sincere words. She whirled on him, blazing.

“You won’t go home with me! I’ll go home by myself. If I’m capable of having my own opinions I’m capable of finding my way home. Thanks a lot.”

She turned again to the door, and Blakesley smiled at her benevolently.

“My dear,” he said in a most fatherly manner, “if you won’t let Clay take you home I would suggest that you rest here for a while. I’ll call Mrs. Blakesley and suggest that she put you to rest in the Blue Room.” He smiled beautifully. “All our most famous guests have been put in the Blue Room.”

“Thanks,” said Honor. “But I’m not a famous guest, and I want to go home.”

Ulysses appeared in the doorway and Honor bit her lip.

“Find Mrs. Blakesley, please, and ask her to come here a moment,” Blakesley said. “And ask Mrs. Phelps to see that the Blue Room is made ready for Miss Winslow. She’ll be a house guest here for a few days.”

"I'm perfectly able to go home," said Honor. "I want to go home!"

Blakesley nodded to Ulysses and the old butler vanished.

HONOR turned then and saw how everyone in the room had risen and moved toward them so that a thick ring of faces surrounded her.

"So I'm a prisoner," she said, "till I change my mind and promise to speak my piece the way you want me to."

"Not a prisoner, my child," Blakesley said. "We couldn't keep you prisoner. It is merely that you will be Mrs. Blakesley's and my guest till you have had an opportunity to understand the situation completely and to offer it your cool and considered thought."

"Oh," said Honor and she made the one small sound somehow mocking and amused.

Mrs. Blakesley came to the doorway, plump and sweet with her piled-up white hair looking like a snow drift.

"You wanted to speak to me, dear?" She tilted her rosy face up to her husband's and her blue eyes twinkled into his. He smiled at her.

"Honor is going to stay with us a few days. She—er—is in a slight condition of shock and she needs a rest."

"Poor child," said Margaret Blakesley sympathetically. "Come along, my dear, and we'll make you as comfortable as we can."

Honor, seething, followed her. For a second as they crossed the hall to the stairs Honor wondered what would happen if she dashed to the front door, yanked it open and ran. Then she noticed the heavy brass chains linked across the door and she knew by the time she fumblingly discovered the combination that would drop them, anybody in the library, attracted by the cry that Margaret Blakesley would no doubt make, could be out to stop her. So, with apparent meekness, she followed the Senator's wife.

The Blue Room was an impressive apartment. The walls were blue satin, and the hangings were blue satin shot with gold. The furniture was Louis Quinze, ornate and gilded, and on the blue and cloud-filled ceiling fat Cupids disported themselves amongst wreaths

and garlands of luscious pink roses.

"I do hope you'll be comfortable and happy here," murmured Mrs. Blakesley.

"You know I don't want to be here," Honor said. "I want to be home or at Bill Frayne's office where I should be. I'm practically a prisoner in your home."

"Oh, no you're not," said Margaret Blakesley as if the idea was childish and cute and amusing. "We wouldn't think of keeping you here against your will. It's really just as my husband said downstairs. You're suffering under slight shock and you're in need of rest. We're only too happy to care for you till you feel better."

She turned toward the door but Honor stopped her.

"Mrs. Blakesley," she said, "you're a charming and sweet woman. You look like everybody's mother. How did you feel when you discovered that your husband was—the things he is?"

Margaret Blakesley came back into the room again and she was smiling gently, though there was a troubled shadow in her eyes.

"Life is difficult." She was hunting for words as if she were untangling a big snarl. She smiled a little. "Wasn't it Emerson who said, 'We do the things we must and we call them by the best names we can,' and that is true. When you are a man's wife, and you love him"—she made a small gesture with her hands—"you do what you must and you call it by the best names you can."

"And so you stood for this—this—"

"Political intrigue," said Mrs. Blakesley, "is the easiest thing to call it."

"You stood for this because you loved your husband. But you didn't like it, you didn't agree with it. You just closed your eyes and pretended it wasn't there."

"Since the early days"—Margaret Blakesley's tone was tender as she remembered—"when Morton would come home and find me in bed crying my heart out with shame and disillusionment, he has protected me from knowing much. He has protected me and I have blinded myself."

"Is that honest?" blurted Honor and thought, "Gosh, if I don't sound like David."

MRS. BLAKESLEY shook her head gently.

"No, it isn't honest. It is just doing the best I can with what I have to do with. In many respects Morton Blakesley is a fine man—and I have never stopped loving him very much."

"There's nothing on earth I love that much!" Honor blazed. And she thought, feeling the burn of her cheeks and the wrath that burned through her, "There's the answer to the question I've been asking myself so long. There are things I won't sacrifice for the things I want."

"You will have to love Clay Darrel that much if you marry him," Mrs. Blakesley said. "Clay is as like Morton Blakesley as if he were Morton's son."

Honor stared at the older woman. "Clay Darrel," she said. She had forgotten Clay. He had gone from her mind completely. And now that she did think of him, "I'm not going to marry Clay. I wouldn't even touch him with a long, long pole." She put her hands behind her back as if that would help to convince Margaret Blakesley.

But Mrs. Blakesley apparently didn't need convincing. She just said softly, "I know how you feel, my dear," and walked out the door.

CHAPTER XI

PRISONER IN LUXURY



RESTLESSLY, Honor walked up and down the room, her feet pressing luxuriously into thick-piled rugs or her heels clicking faintly on polished patches of floor. On a bedside table there

was a phone, blue enameled to match the hangings and the satin walls.

She looked at it a minute, then picked it up. The dial tone was clear, so it was a straight outside line and it was open—but what good did that do her? Who would she call and why?

For a fleeting second she thought of David. She could call him, tell him where she was, and how she'd got there and ask him to rescue her. So then what would he do? Come bare-handed to de-

mand her at the front door? Or bring a few hand-picked policemen to raid the place and get her out?

If David came alone the men downstairs might tear him limb from limb. They would certainly feel like it. And what policemen would be willing to do violence to the dignified ex-Senator Blakesley who, for all she knew, might own the police force?

No, she would get out of this by herself. Even if the police were not in Blakesley's pocket they still couldn't raid a house without a warrant. And what kind of a warrant could you get for a man who was, amiably and pleasantly, taking care of a friend of his and his wife's who was suffering under a mild shock?

Honor began to pace the floor again.

Ulysses came to the door, knocked, and said that Mr. Blakesley would like her to come to the library. She went down and stood in the doorway. Everybody had gone home but Clay and he and the Senator were in deep chairs on either side of the enormous fireplace, talking. They stood up when they saw Honor, and the Senator came forward to meet her.

"I hope you feel better, my dear. Clay and I felt it would be a good thing to have a talk over the luncheon table. Will you come in, my dear?"

Honor walked in slowly. She said nothing. If there was one rule of diplomacy that the Senator had dinned into her during these weeks of training it was that unless you were sure exactly what you wanted to say the only thing to do was to keep still. Also that, if you kept still, the other fellow frequently talked himself into trouble. Honor remembered all this and merely smiled quietly.

"This is a difficult situation for you to run into when you're so young in politics," Clay said, "but the road's not always smooth, and you have to learn to take everything that comes up in your stride."

"Mrs. Blakesley said the same thing," murmured Honor, "when she was talking to me upstairs." She smiled at the Senator. "You have a very wise and wonderful wife," she told him. "And she's so devoted to you. It's marvelous."

The words themselves, Honor thought, said nothing, and if anybody wanted to read things into them was it her fault?

"I knew it—I knew it!" the Senator said, and slapped his knee triumphantly. "I'll have to buy Margaret a new hat for this. So she's been talking to you, has she? I might have known. You can always trust Margaret when my interests are involved. What did she tell you, Honor?"

Honor smiled and put a touch of mystery into it. "You can't expect me to tell you what she said, Senator. I'm sure she didn't expect me to repeat it."

"Well, well," said the Senator, and a smile came to wreath his pink and white face.

From the doorway Ulysses announced lunch.

Honor went in, walking between the two men, but not taking the arm of either, remembering the first time she had come to dinner. She had thought then that all she wanted in the world was a home like this, a dining room like this, to live like this.

And she had determined that night to get it all. It had seemed to her that her feet were set deliciously on the road to such glittering accomplishment. Well, it was still there for her. All she had to do was reach out her hand and take it.

She folded her hands in her lap and they gripped each other until the knuckles went white.

"So," the Senator said jovially, shaking out his napkin, "you have decided, thanks to my devoted wife, to ask us to forget your hysterical, schoolgirlish little scene in the library this morning. And of course we will. Won't we, Clay? We'll be only too glad to pretend that the whole thing never happened. How's that, my dear? We go on from where we were before the papers came out and the unfortunate hour between ten and eleven never happened."

HONOR'S mind clicked rapidly and out of the clicking sparked an idea. She was amazed that she hadn't thought of it before.

"You may do as you like about forgetting what you call the unfortunate scene in the library," she said carefully. "I shall remember it."

The two men jumped as if she had given them the hot foot.

"What do you mean?" thundered Blakesley.

"Honor!" cried Clay, and his voice was filled with horror and reproach as if she had stabbed him.

"It isn't like either of you to jump to conclusions," Honor said quietly, "so I don't know why you have now. All I said was that Mrs. Blakesley had talked to me. I didn't mention what she said!"

"You said she'd advised you." The Senator's face was red, going to purple. "When I gave you some advice you said Margaret had said the same thing."

"So I did," said Honor. "And so she had. She talked to me a long time. But I didn't say that any of it had influenced me in the least. Because it didn't. I'm of exactly the same opinion as I was this morning, during the 'hysterical schoolgirlish scene in the library.'"

Blakesley groaned. Clay leaned forward.

"Listen, Honor." His tone was low, his face was patient and kindly. "It's too bad, as I said, that you had to run into a thing like this right at the beginning of your political life, but it was bound to come sooner or later and—"

"You mean," asked Honor clearly, "that all politicians are crooks? That all of them steal from the poor to line their own pockets?"

"Look here," said Blakesley, "I resent that."

"After what happened this morning," said Honor, "it doesn't seem to me you have the right to resent anything."

"Pardon me, Miss Winslow," said Ulysses at her shoulder. "Do you wish to take more consomme or shall I remove your cup?"

"Remove it," said Honor. "And you can't take more when you haven't taken any. I was brought up," she announced largely, "by a simple, old-fashioned father who believed that you should not break bread nor take salt with your enemies. I'm eating nothing, thank you, Ulysses."

"Why you—you little—" Blakesley's purple face, his pounding fist said the words that choked his throat.

Clay said nothing, but his face was as white and stiff as starch and his eyes

were black pits.

"May I go home now?" Honor said, and her voice was polite and sweet.

"Home!" The Senator got that word and shot it out like a machine-gun bullet. "Home! You'll certainly not go home. You'll go upstairs and we'll talk this thing over again at dinner."

"Thank you, sir," said Honor mad-deningly, and went out of the room quickly and almost ran up the stairs.

She wondered as she flew what she would have done if Blakesley had let her go home. It would certainly have spoiled things.

She whisked into the Blue Room and skipped to the pretty blue enamel telephone. Her finger shook as she dialed the number, and her voice shook as she asked for Jim Barkley. "If he isn't there, she thought frantically, what'll I do?" And even then nobody knew better than she how small the chance was of a reporter on the *Chronicle* being in the office at noon. But he was there and she could have fainted when she heard his voice.

"Jim! This is Honor Winslow. I'm at the Blakesley house and I'm being kept here till I change my mind. If you want a story—"

She stopped. Someone, somewhere, had cut the connection. Did they have a switch in the house that could cut out the extensions? Probably. And just as probably nobody had thought of cutting off the Blue Room when they had put her into it. Well, they had thought of it now all right.

Honor got up from the low chair beside the phone and crossed the room. All she could do now was wait. If Jim had understood her he would be on the run. But if he hadn't or if he had thought someone was pulling a trick . . . Well, she would just stay here until she thought of something else.

She crossed the room and stepped out on a balcony that ran along the front windows. The air was golden, but cool and sharp, too. It felt good on her hot cheeks and she lifted her head to it, feeling it lift her hair and flow along her skin.

BEHIND her someone knocked on her door and she turned her head, won-

dering what to do about it. The knock came again, louder and more demanding. Honor thought quickly. If Jim Barkley was coming she must play for time. If he wasn't coming nothing made any difference. She let the knock grow to a pounding, then called out:

"Just a moment. I'm coming."

She took as long as she dared to come in and cross the room. Then she opened the door.

Morton Blakesley himself stood there. His face was red and his eyes shot fire.

"Ulysses tells me you made a phone call from this room. Who did you call?"

Ha-ha! So he didn't know.

"Didn't Ulysses tell you?" Honor said.

Blue veins stood out like ropes under Blakesley's ears. He had made a mistake letting her know he didn't know. His anger had tricked him into it and that made him more angry.

"Ulysses is a stupid fool," he said. "I told him to cut off that extension and he hadn't done it. Then he picked up a phone downstairs and heard your voice and remembered I'd told him. So he cut you off then, and after that he got scared and reported to me. He ought to be discharged. He ought to have his ears sliced."

"No, he shouldn't," said Honor reasonably. "If I hadn't been able to make the call this way I'd have found another way." This she was not too sure about but it sounded good.

"All right—all right. Whom did you call?"

Honor looked at him. From afar off she heard a siren rising and screaming its way along the streets. Her heart did a flip-flop. Could it be . . . was it possible? She decided to play the long chance.

"Is there any way you can make me tell?" she said gently, to gain just a little more time, and watched the rage that seemed to tear Blakesley apart.

The siren was definitely coming nearer. And fast.

"I'll find a way to make you!" Blakesley said through his teeth. "You can't lead me around by the nose. I'll—"

"Don't bother with threats," said Honor. The siren was maybe four blocks away. "I'll tell you without them. I called Jim Barkley down at the *Chron-*

icle. I know Jim pretty well. He's been at almost all my meetings, covering them for his paper and I . . . Well, I thought he might be interested."

"Interested! In what?" Blakesley was so intent on Honor and the information she was dangling along that he didn't hear the siren stop right in front of his house.

"In the fact that I was being kept here till I changed my mind," Honor said.

"You told him that?" It was a roar that filled the house, reverberating and bouncing from all the walls. "You told him that? And he'll be here any minute! If he finds you here—"

"You'll be in a most embarrassing position, won't you, Senator?" Honor asked sweetly.

Beyond the Senator's shoulder and down the stairwell she could see Ulysses go to open the front door because somebody had rung the bell.

"All right, young lady, you've won." Blakesley's voice rumbled and spat fire. "You've won. Get out of here. Get away fast before—"

"You're too late now," said Honor happily. She called out gleefully, "I'm up here, Jim! They're still working on me to make me change my mind."

CHAPTER XII

INDEPENDENT GIRL CANDIDATE



EVERYTHING happened at once after that. There was Jim's voice and his joyous grin and his red hair, there was the flash of bulbs and the Senator's roar, and then Honor's hand gripped Jim's as he tore back down the stairs and out the front door practically to throw her in the seat of his coupé.

"You really have them!" cried Honor, and laughed at the four motor cycle cops who shoved off as Jim pulled his car from the curb. "I heard the siren and I hoped," said Honor, "but I didn't really believe."

"And did you think I'd come up to Blakesley's to rescue you with just my

two bare hands?" Jim said. "Don't be silly. This kind of thing needs all the publicity it can get."

They drove downtown with the sirens still screaming and everybody turning to look at them. But two blocks from the *Chronicle* suddenly the escort wasn't with them any more. Jim laughed.

"Scared to risk the fury of the powers that be by identifying themselves too closely with us." He turned and grinned at Honor. "You should have seen the fast work I did to get them to go with me at all. I told 'em it was Blakesley's orders and they didn't find out different for quite a while." He laughed out loud. And then he said, "Come along to the city room. We'll get a stenographer and a rewrite man and we'll go to town."

Half an hour later Honor's story was safely down in black and white and Honor herself began to feel a bit bushed. She realized that she'd had nothing to eat all day. Her breakfast hadn't been eaten because she had refused to eat the Senator's food. Now she was suddenly famished. She pushed back her chair and stood up.

"Oh," said Jim. "One thing more. What about Clay Darrel? Are you going to marry him?"

"Marry him?" said Honor. "That political two-timing stuffed shirt? I should say not!"

"Huh," said a voice behind her. "Will you listen to that."

And there was David.

Honor whirled to face him. He grinned at her but it wasn't the same kind of grin he used to give her.

"I have a good nose," he said. "It smells things. It smells trouble and it smells news. I knew something was stewing when I dropped in here."

"It's me," said Honor ungrammatically. "I'm stewing all over the place."

"She's just ditched the Senator and all his little pals," said Jim. "Thrown 'em down flat. They all have dirty noses where she's rubbed 'em into the dirt."

"You don't say!" David looked at her with new eyes, but even now he obviously had reservations. Then a slow light moved into his face and he said softly, "So what are you going to do now? Go out by yourself on an in-

dependent ticket?"

"Gee!" said Jim, delighted awe in his tone. "I bet she could at that."

"Sure she could," said David. "She's popular, and when this fight she's had with the Senator gets bruited around she'll be more popular with a lot of people she couldn't have touched before."

Honor was busy thinking. But a warm glow was spreading through her and she knew her eyes must be enormous with the vision that had suddenly come to fill them.

"Would it be asking too much," she said to David, "if I suggested that a steak would save my life? I haven't eaten all day."

Jim whooped. "Did I miss something? Do you mean to say the Senator starved you out?"

"No," said Honor. "He didn't starve me. I told you he sat me down at the luncheon table to discuss my foolish hysteria of the morning, but I refused to eat anything because my father had instilled into me a fancy notion that you shouldn't break bread with your enemies, since it put you under a moral responsibility and obligation to them." She laughed merrily. "So I wouldn't eat the Senator's food with the Senator."

David gave a soft satisfied whistle. "Blood tells," he muttered. "Boy, does it tell!"

"That I would have liked to see—you turning down the Senator's squab," Jim said. "What did he say?"

"He didn't like it," Honor understated demurely. "No, he didn't like it."

"For that I'll buy you two steaks," David said, laughing uproariously. "Come along, you beautiful politician, you."

"I'm coming too," said Jim. "If any campaigns are going to be planned I'm going to be in on the ground floor."

David eyed him sternly. "Come if you want to," he said, "but nothing's going to be put in your paper till I say so. Understood?"

"Understood," said Jim, and reached for his hat.

BY THE time they had finished their steaks and tossed salad and apple pie and were lingering over coffee, Hon-

or's campaign was pretty well mapped out.

"All right," she said. "I know what I'm going to say but do you know where I'm going to say it? Every hall in this town is sewed up good and solid with everybody's else political meetings. What do you think is left for me?"

"Street corners," said Jim promptly. "If you've never shouted from a soap box it's high time you did. Nobody should live and not have the experience."

"I'll find something for you," David said. "Come down to my office in the morning. Or do you still have a job with Bill Frayne?"

Honor shook her head ruefully. "I don't know. Bill told me a while ago that the Senator and all his little pals were as pure as the driven snow, and that sounds as if he was one of the Senator's stable. So maybe, having done what I've done, I haven't got a job."

"Well," said David, "find out in the morning and let me know. I'll wait in my office for your call. And now, if you'll excuse me, I've got an appointment."

"I've got to run, too," said Jim. "Can we drop you at your apartment, Honor?"

"Thanks," said Honor, and felt as if she had been kicked in the teeth.

But of course she realized, when she had gone home and was alone, she had no business to feel that way. Neither Jim nor David had dated her, there was nothing social about it at all. It was purely business.

But the question hammered at her—what kind of an appointment did David have at quarter of eight in the evening? Of course lawyers did do business in the evening quite frequently. Or was it a girl? Was David, right this minute, out with a girl somewhere? Looking at her, laughing with her, saying things with that amused tenderness that turned the heart?

Honor caught her breath with the pain that went through her, and in that minute she knew.

"Oh," she said aloud, "I'm in love with him! I've been in love with him all the time, and I never knew."

Of course she had never known—she

could see it now—because she'd been blinded by the glare of her burning ambition. She hadn't been able to see anything but the dazzling wealth and success she had wanted. So she had lost what she wanted most—love and David.

She knew now she had lost him. She could feel the certainty washing over her like a bitter tidal wave, and she sank down on the floor, burying her head in her arms, because suddenly she had no strength to stand up. She had no strength to do anything just then but weep. . . .

The next morning at nine o'clock she went into Bill Frayne's office.

"The Boss would have a word with you imejit," said Sally. And added, "It don't look so good, baby."

"I can't help how it looks," said Honor crossly, and went into the D.A.'s office with her hat still on.

Bill looked up and his eyes were inscrutable.

"Why did you do it?" he asked sadly.

"Wouldn't you have done it?" Honor said.

He didn't answer that directly. He just kept on looking at her and his eyes didn't change.

"Life's too short for heroic gestures," he finally said. "You're young now and you think you're fine and brave and smart. But you'll find out."

"I'm not a blind fool," Honor said. "I know what I'm getting into. And I know now that I'd rather get into it and walk on nails than not get into it and sleep on rose petals."

"See?" said Bill. "I said you were young."

"Look here!" Anger suddenly shook her voice and put red banners into her cheeks. "You and Clay and Blakesley and all the rest of you have done your best to make me believe that politics is a slimy game full of bribery and corruption. Well, I say it isn't! I say that you can play it and keep your hands clean! I say you can give your life to politics and still hold your head up. And I say you can go into politics for the reason politics is supposed to exist to give the people a better government!

"Have you ever thought of that? Politics isn't made to line the pockets of people like you and Clay and Blakesley.

Politics is made to help more of the people more of the time to live better and do better and be better. And that's that."

She stared at Bill Frayne with blazing eyes and he stared back with his sad ones.

"I wish," he finally said slowly, "and I really wish it with all my heart, that I were young and had my choice to make over again. You know it's a tragic thing that the time of choice comes only once."

HONOR said nothing and the silence grew in the office till it seemed like a thick fog settling on and around everything.

"You sent for me, Mr. Frayne," Honor finally said. "Was it something special?"

He lifted his eyes from the blotter which he had been jabbing thoughtfully with a pencil point and looked at her. She had the feeling that he was hunting for words the way he might have hunted through a pile of broken rock for a pearl.

"I'm sorry, Honor," he said gently. "You've been a great help and a splendid worker."

"You mean I'm fired?"

She had known it was coming but even so it was a shock. She liked the job, she belonged to it, though if she won the election she would be leaving it anyway.

"I'm sorry, Honor," Bill Frayne said again and held out his hand.

Honor took it and felt the warm, firm, sincere pressure. Bill Frayne was sincere. He liked her and he was sorry. He had just got into a spot that was bigger and stronger than he was and now, at this too-late date, there was nothing he could do about it.

"Good-by, Mr. Frayne," Honor said, and went out the door.

Sally, strangely enough, looked as if she had been crying.

"Good grief, child," said Honor, "it's not that bad."

"B-but you're disgraced!" cried Sally. "You're being f-fired in disgrace!"

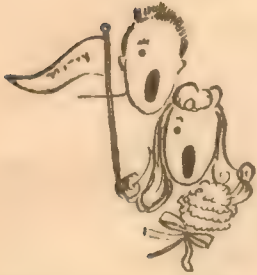
"Oh, no I'm not," said Honor. She laughed out loud. "Believe me, infant, I was never less disgraced in my whole

life. I'm getting along just fine."

Tossing a kiss to Sally's big eyes, she went out the door.

CHAPTER XIII

ON HER OWN



ONLY twenty minutes later, Honor was walking up the stairs to David's office. Had it been only the day before—twenty-four short hours ago—that she had raced up

these stairs in a fine fury, bent on defending Blakesley and Clay? It seemed in another age. How the whole world can change between one sunup and the next!

She walked down the corridor and opened David's office door—and then she just stood there, looking, and not saying a word.

The girl talking to David turned around, glanced at Honor, and stopped talking.

"I tell you, Bettina," David said. "Why don't you do that shopping and then come back? I'll be free in an hour."

The girl lifted a lovely oval face and her brown eyes looked as if they would melt with adoration. Her hair was brown too, thick and soft, and it rested on her shoulders in gleaming waves. Her skin was ivory, and her mouth looked like a fresh picked rose.

"All right," she said to David in a voice that was music and whispering moonlight. "I'll do anything you say." Stepping lightly, she went out the door.

"Who on earth is that?" asked Honor. She realized her voice was sharp, but she couldn't do anything about it.

David grinned. "Her name is Bettina Fox. Lovely, isn't she? And, as the fairy tales always observed, she's as good as she is beautiful."

"How touching," said Honor. Her tone was bitter and sarcastic with the pain that was gripping her. "I'm sure she's perfect. Do I congratulate you?"

David's grin didn't change, but his

eyes began dancing. A happier man Honor had never seen.

"She's really wonderful, isn't she?" he said softly. "I—hope you'll be able to congratulate me very soon."

Honor rolled her fingers into a tight little ball. There was a good heavy inkwell on David's desk and she fought the urge to throw it at him.

"Well," he said briskly, still grinning happily, "shall we get down to work? I assume you've lost your job."

"Bill was sorry," she said. "He really was."

"I don't doubt it. Bill's a good sort. He just took the wrong turning, that's all."

"That's exactly what he said. And do you know what, David? The wrong turning is a mighty easy thing to take. I know. I almost took it."

That was an idiotic thing to say. Corny and superdramatic. Sob stuff. What was she trying to do? Build herself up big so David would look at her again the way he had once looked at her? Well, girl, she told herself sourly, that's not the way to do it.

"Oh, so you feel noble and brave, do you?" David said. "Well, you'll need it. It's going to be a tough and dirty fight, and don't think it isn't. The names you're going to be called and the muck that's going to be thrown at you in the next seven days is going to be something that shouldn't happen to any man's daughter. You haven't even begun to dream what's going to happen to you yet. This time next week when you're nursing your battle scars and licking your wounds maybe you won't talk so nobly."

"All right," said Honor. "Maybe I won't."

Her face was crimson and her eyes burned with tears that pushed themselves against her eyelids. She had made an idiotic remark for sure, but did David have to scald her like this for it?

"Let's get down to business, shall we?" she said.

They were still talking and planning and outlining speeches for Honor when the sweet and lovely Bettina came back again.

"Oh!" She stood in the doorway, her

soft lips round and kissable with the sound of surprise she had made. "I'm too early, aren't I? David, shall I go out again?"

"So," thought Honor scornfully, "she asks him if she shall come in or go out. How does she do about breathing all by herself? And I suppose David laps it up."

Apparently David did because his eyes, resting on Bettina, were filled with a fond and tender light.

WITH a switch of her skirts Honor stood up.

"It's quite all right," she snapped like a string of firecrackers. "I'm just leaving. Good-by, David and thanks so much for your interest. It's been most kind of you."

Her heels whacked on the floor and she was just realizing that she would have to knock Bettina down to get out the door when a roar stopped her.

"Hey!" It was David. "What do you think you're doing? You stay here till I'm through with you!"

Honor spun around, her eyes blazing.

"And who do you think you're ordering around? Some people who adore you so it drips out their big brown eyes make take that kind of nonsense from you, but I won't. 'When can I come in?'" Honor mocked in a furious whine. "'When may I go out?'" Phooie! *I'll* come and go as I please!" She whirled back to the door and yanked it open.

"You'll come right back here!" David hadn't moved. He was still behind his desk and he evidently expected her to creep back and stand before him with folded hands and an obediently drooping head.

Honor took two steps out into the hall.

"Do you want to know where I've arranged for you to speak tonight?" his voice came out to her. "Or do you want to go stamping off in a rage like a spoiled brat? Are you a politician or a baby?"

Honor stood still. She was so mad that the whole hall danced up and down in a red fog but David's taunting words clanged in the air like a racket of challenge. Are you a politician or a baby? Well, she was a politician, or trying to be one, and you couldn't be a good any-

thing if you let your emotions whip you into a meringue of frenzy. Slowly Honor pulled into a deep breath. She turned around and stood in the doorway.

"All right," she said coldly. "Where do I speak tonight?"

"Three places," announced David happily. "And don't think I wasn't the bright boy to get them. We've got a loft on Main Street for one and Zero's garage for another, and—"

"Zero's garage!" said Honor. "How's anybody going to do anything in a garage?"

David grinned. "You can get a thousand people in that garage and if you're as good as I think you'll be they'll be glad to stand up to listen to you."

Honor thought, "I've got to be good if David has faith in me." And then she looked at Bettina standing against the wall and knew it wouldn't make any difference.

"All right," she said bitterly. "Where's the third place?"

"A nice respectable school," said David. "A private school. Orlando Briggs, who runs it, is liberal and progressive and when I told him I wanted his support for you he nearly exploded with delight. So he's filling his little theatre for you at nine-thirty . . . Have you seen your posters?"

"Posters?" said Honor.

"Well, don't look so amazed. Jim's on a newspaper, and I'm not so dumb. Do you think we'd let our candidate go without posters? You trot right down and look at 'em. They should be all over town."

Honor turned and went down the corridor to the stairs and as she went she heard David's voice, raised a little.

"All right, Bettina—come on over here to me."

And then, infuriatingly, she heard the girl's soft and lovely laugh.

Honor clattered down the rest of the stairs, making her heels sound like a drumroll so that she wouldn't hear anything else and she plunged out of the doorway onto the sidewalk. And there, nailed into a post facing her, was one of the posters. The cut was one the newspapers had had and it showed her looking young and lovely and wide-eyed. Not at all as the words in big black

letters above and below the picture sounded. Above the picture was:

DEFIES BLAKESLEY RING
A VOTE FOR WINSLOW IS
A VOTE FOR HONEST GOVERNMENT

"Well!" said Honor out loud. Jim and David had done well by her. It didn't seem they could have done more.

"Hello, Honor Winslow," said a voice behind her, and she turned to look at a man she had never seen before.

He was medium tall, medium age—middle thirtyish—with thoughtful gray eyes and a nice smile.

"I'm Orlando Briggs," he introduced himself. "You're speaking at my school tonight—I hope. And say,"—he grinned boyishly—"did you really tell Blakesley off? It must have been good. Why did you do it when you were sitting so pretty?"

"Because nobody's sitting pretty if you have to sell your sense of decency and self-respect to sit there." She smiled engagingly. "Once upon a time I thought I wanted success that spelled luxury and ease. I went into politics because I met Blakesley and it looked like a short-cut to all the things I wanted. Then I got a close-up view and the price was not only high but it would have to be paid in a coin that was counterfeit. And that isn't politics, Mr. Briggs. At least not my kind of politics. I guess it took a jolt like that to show me what my kind of politics was."

"And what is it?" asked Briggs.

Honor took a deep breath. Out of the corner of her eye she noticed that a couple of people had stopped, recognizing her, and were interested. So she began giving. She said all the things she had said to Bill Frayne in his office and she embroidered it, putting on trimming.

"Government isn't government if it isn't an instrument guided by some of the people for the rest of the people. If it's an instrument guided by a few of the people for the good of the same few I'd call it corruption and thievery, but I certainly wouldn't call it government."

Somebody cheered, and then a lot of people cheered, and Honor discovered she was talking to a couple of hundred

people. The sidewalks were jammed on both sides of the street and the street was blocked so that traffic was stalled. And in the middle of the crowd was Jim Barkley, cheering his head off and waving his hat at her.

"We'd better break this up," Honor said calmly, "before the cops get us for obstructing traffic. But I'm holding three meetings tonight"—she told them where—"and I hope you all can come."

She stood still while the crowd dissolved and Jim came over to her.

"Boy-oh-boy!" His grin was radiant, his red hair was a torch. "Aren't we going to lay 'em out in rows! Aren't you wonderful! Don't we begin right now to make the history! Boy-oh-boy-oh-boy! David should have been here."

That made Honor remember. All the excitement and glow faded out of her.

"David's up in his office, busy," she said. She turned around to walk home to her apartment to rest up for the tough evening that was ahead of her.

And, make no mistake, it was a tough evening. The Opposition had planted hecklers everywhere and they were smart hecklers and they ran Honor ragged. David and Jim ran interference for her but, no matter what they did, the first two meetings were nightmares.

David had been right. There was a mob crowding the garage and they were glad to stand to hear her. Though the hecklers, cat-calling, shouting, asking unanswerable questions and calling her fiendish names, robbed her of any possible feeling of triumph.

"Of course you know they wouldn't do it if they didn't feel the weakness of their position," said David comfortably.

"We're not sending hecklers to their meetings, you notice," Jim said, thumping his chest. "That's because we don't have to sink that low to win."

"Yeah," said Honor.

The last meeting, the one at Briggs' school, was by far the best. Either the hecklers had got tired, or the dignified atmosphere of the school was too much for them because only two had to be thrown out. And Mr. Briggs did that himself. Not by using any physical violence but just by the sheer force of his eloquence.

"That man," said David afterward, "should be a political speaker on his own hook."

"He has been," said Jim. "I asked him, and he's going to speak for Honor tomorrow night. Right here at his school again."

"I'm going to speak for Honor down on River Street," David said. "I'm going to tell 'em that Honor's saved their housing project for 'em and if I don't land every vote in the district my name's mud."

HONOR looked from one of them to the other.

"I think you're both wonderful," she said. "And if I win—"

"When you win," said Jim.

"All right, when I win." Honor laughed, but she was suddenly tired, the excitement dying, the exhaustion creeping up. "When I win you'll be the ones who did it."

David grinned at her. "Oh, you've done a bit here and there."

"Like refuse to eat Blakesley salt and break his bread," chuckled Jim. That story had been headlined in the morning papers and it had sent the town into an uproar.

"Look," David said, "I don't want to overestimate the enemy, but has it occurred to you that they may try tricks on Honor?"

"Sure," said Jim. "By day after tomorrow when her popularity has rolled up king size they'll be fit to try anything."

"You mean maybe I'll get liquidated?" Honor said.

"That's not so funny," said Jim. "You've got to remember you've made that crowd terrible mad. And they're not the crowd to take a mad lying down."

"No, they won't try to liquidate you," David said soberly. "They'll try something smarter." He turned and met Honor's eyes squarely. "Where have you attacked them?" he asked. "Where have you hurt them most? In the reputation. As of this moment their reputation isn't worth a pricked balloon. All right. So if they could punch holes in your reputation they could shout out calling you names and ask what right you had to

throw stones. It wouldn't make them any purer, but it would cut you down to their size and they could fight you as equals."

"I see," said Honor. She turned it in her mind.

"Why scare the kid now?" Jim said. "I tell you they won't waste their ammunition till they're sure she's a worthy opponent. Give her another couple of days, and then we'll play bodyguard to her. Things are all right for now."

"Yes," said David. "I guess they are." They reached Honor's apartment house and David slid his car to the curb.

"I'll walk her to the door," said Jim, and slid out onto the sidewalk.

"Sure," said David and settled himself a little behind the wheel.

CHAPTER XIV

KNIGHTS WITHOUT ARMOR



FORLORNLY Honor went up the walk, her heels clicking. Oh, of course David wouldn't want to be alone with her for three or four or maybe ten minutes. He would never care if he was alone with her again. Bettina—Bettina—

Her heels clicked the name and her heart felt as if nails were driving it in.

"Here," Jim said, fishing a paper from his pocket. "Here's this. If you feel like splicing from a street corner again be sure and have this license in your pocket. I got it right after I left you, and I hope nobody'll discover you got it after and not before you stopped traffic this morning." He stuck the folded paper in the slit of her suit pocket and saluted her. "Sleep tight. See you in the morning."

She went in the door to the sound of his retreating footsteps.

Three minutes later she was fitting her key into the lock of her door. She was really tired now. She felt drained. She had poured herself out in those three speeches, squeezed herself dry with all the talk afterward, with people pumping her hand, asking her ques-

tions, crowds pushing her. Maybe if this kind of thing were her life long enough she would get used to it. She wasn't used to it now. She wanted to get to bed and sleep a million years.

She turned the key and swung the door open. And stopped, staring. A man she had never seen before sat in one of her overstuffed chairs, his feet up on her divan. He was in his shirt sleeves and a cigarette hung from his lower lip. Besides those details he was oily-looking and had thin, narrow hips, narrow shoulders and black eyes like marbles.

"Come in, Miss Honor Winslow," he said. He stressed her given name so that it was an insult.

Honor hadn't yet closed the door. She pulled it wider and took a step backward into the hall. Something gave her a shove that landed her stumbling in the middle of her foyer and the door was slammed behind her.

"That," said the man in the living room, "is what you call cooperation. Also it lets you know in a more or less convincing fashion that there's a lad out in the hall that will nab you if you try to get away."

Honor, feeling tight and tense, walked slowly into the living room.

"What are you going to do with me?" she asked.

"Nothing, baby." He grinned at her. "Not a thing in the world. I'm not going to touch a hair of your innocent young head. You can go to bed and sleep the sleep of the beautiful, completely unmolested. I'll just stay here with my feet on your divan, or maybe as the hour waxed later I'll lie down on the divan and go to sleep.

"But in the morning—ah, in the morning!" He rolled his marble eyes up and a smile curled his mouth like a pretzel. "In the morning, when I walk out of your apartment you're going to be surprised to see how many cops there'll be to witness me opening your door. And there'll be photographers and—oh, lots of people. Lots and lots. It'll be a party."

He grinned again and Honor felt chilled fingers touch her spine.

"Keep calm," she told herself firmly. "Lose your head and you lose every-

thing. Just remember there's always a way out of everything if you're just smart enough to think of it." And then she thought, "Jim and David being so smart! Deciding in the know-it-all male way that nothing can happen to me for a couple of days anyhow. Then they're going to play bodyguard. Then. Two days too late. By two days from now I'll be finished, unless I think of something. Think, girl. Think!"

She took a casual step forward and the man laughed. Two ugly notes that were worse than anything he could have said.

"Don't try that," he advised. "It would be a waste of time. I cut the phone as soon as I came in. Do you think we'd let you at a phone twice?"

That idea was funny, and he laughed and laughed. Honor laughed too, a little hysterically, because if she didn't she would either cry or fly at him and scratch his eyes out, neither of which seemed to the still sensible part of her mind very smart things to do.

The man stopped laughing and looked at her.

"Go on," he said. "Go to bed if you want to. Nobody's going to lay a finger on you—though I'm sorry that it's got to played that way. You're a sweet girl." He looked at her with moistly wistful eyes, then he shook his head. "Go on. My word of honor nothing'll happen to you."

"And just what," asked Honor, scorn curling her lips, "do you think I think your word is worth?" But she crossed to the bedroom door all the same and went in closing it behind her.

OF COURSE she wasn't going to bed. It had just occurred to her that it might be easier to think if Marble Eyes wasn't looking at her. So she stood in the middle of the floor and thought. And out of it came an idea.

She opened another door and stepped into the kitchen. The kitchen window opened on the fire-escape and maybe, if she moved softly and didn't turn up the light. . . She stopped. No amount of moving softly would do it and it didn't make any difference if she turned up fifty lights. There was a man on the fire-escape. She could see the bulk of his

shadow against the sky beyond, and no doubt there were more henchmen on the roof and down below on the ground and out in front and everywhere.

"Well, girl," thought Honor bleakly, "it's flattering to know they consider you valuable enough to break out with the regiment, anyhow."

She tiptoed softly back into the bedroom. Softly, in her stocking feet now, she began to pace up and down the room—thinking—thinking—thinking. There were two outlets she hadn't checked. The rubbish chute and the dumb-waiter. Dropping down a verticle well into a hard cement floor the way the rubbish did might not be too practical, but the dumb-waiter was a hope. If she could curl up inside and find a way of working the ropes— She slipped out through the door again into the kitchen.

And there she stopped dead. The man on the fire-escape was no longer a bulk of shadow. He was real and he was standing in the middle of her kitchen floor, his shoulders broad and dark against the unlighted gloom, his face—she guessed—turned away. Or maybe not. In the silhouette of his head you could tell nothing.

Honor bit back the scream that tore through her throat. Screaming was the last thing she wanted to do. If she stayed still, quiet, motionless, and if he crossed and went in to his buddy in the living room she might be able to slip out the open kitchen window behind him and get away somehow across the roof.

The man took a step toward her and she knew now that he had seen her. Another scream bubbled in her throat but this one was throttled by a hand over her mouth. Another arm gripped her shoulders. The man held her tight, immovable.

"Get into the bedroom, you little goop, and stay there. We're fixing this." The whisper against her ear was all but soundless. But she knew.

David! Relief poured through her in almost an agony. David—David—David! She sagged against him and he picked her and carried her into the bedroom, depositing her on the bed.

And then, in that instant, pandemonium broke loose. Men yelled, feet

pounded, a shot crashed somewhere, and David was gone, banging the living room door open and crashing through it. Honor was right behind him but, quick as she was, it was all over when she went in. Marble Eyes was sitting in a chair with David happily sitting in his lap and Jim was in the doorway leading out into the hall, grinning at a cop who was grinning at a couple of low-looking characters all tied up in handcuffs.

"We saw a man looking over the parapet on your roof when we brought you home," David said, "so we stuck around. Honest people don't peer off parapets at midnight."

"Did you think we'd desert you, honey, in your hour of need?" Jim said.

"Oh, you're wonderful—you're wonderful!" Honor said. "But let's get some coffee."

So she made a gallon of coffee and they even gave Marble Eyes and the two bums some before the cop carted them off to jail. After that, and after Jim and David had finally gone, Honor—just as dawn was a gray light in the sky—got to bed. . . .

The next five days were a dizzy haze. When Honor tried to think of them afterward, to separate events and say this happened at such a time and that happened afterward, she could remember nothing in detail. It was all blurred like the scenery that passes on a roller coaster.

There was David and Jim—and there was Bettina. Bettina was everywhere. David apparently couldn't breathe without her. She was there at all the endless meetings, she was around whenever they ate. She was with David and Jim when they brought Honor home each evening and she always smiled sweetly and waved good night as Jim escorted Honor up the walk to her door and Bettina—bless her!—stayed in the car with David.

"They make a handsome couple, don't they?" Jim would say. And then he would say, peering at her, "Honor, you look jealous. Are you jealous? I mean are you that way about David, and is this eating you up? Honor, are you? Is it?"

"No, I'm not and it isn't," Honor

would snap furiously. "I'm nowhere near in love with David Proctor. If you want to know I hate him!"

"Tut, tut," Jim would say cheerily and, having deposited her at her door, he would go back down the walk whistling.

BUT that, of course, didn't mean she was left alone. There were volunteer guardsmen who, investigated and put on the job by David, sat smoking endless cigarettes outside her hall door and out on her fire-escape all night long. The publicity given the one attempt made on her reputation had fired the gallantry of the town, sermons had been preached the following Sunday, various organizations had given demonstrations, and each day David had a good fifty of the city's finest to choose from for his two night guards.

Of course Blakesley had denied all knowledge of the attempt to frame Honor. He had never seen Marble Eyes, he had never seen anybody who had ever seen Marble Eyes, he knew nothing about it. Some people who wanted to believe his denials believed them, but the eyes of the majority were getting opened, and everybody knew that the attempted frame had done Honor's cause much more good than harm.

And they had done nothing else. In the five days that had followed, Blakesley and his henchmen had been quiescent. They had called Honor a few names in their public speeches but apparently they had given her up. After all, no doubt they had bigger fish to fry. Though what could be bigger than a complete loss of face and reputation Honor couldn't quite see. At any rate, they left her alone and she was grateful.

Monday morning, with election only twenty-four hours away, Honor was walking down Grand Street. She felt good. Jim said and David said and she felt that her election was in the bag. Bettina said so, too, but Bettina's opinion wasn't worth ashes in Honor's opinion. So Honor felt pretty good.

She walked down Grand Street and turned into High, and she felt like whistling or skipping or doing something pretty gay. It was twelve o'clock and at twelve-thirty she was to meet David

and Jim—and Bettina, of course!—at the Grill for lunch. So there was half an hour to kill.

"Honor!" called someone and Honor turned.

There, just sliding her car to the curb, was Matilda Gregson, tall and slim and beautifully tailored as always. Honor hadn't seen her to speak to since that awful morning she had faced them all in Blakesley's library. She had supposed, if she had thought of it at all, that Matilda was still hand-in-glove with the old outfit. So, now, Honor bowed a clipped little bow and smiled coldly.

"Honor, please wait a minute." Matilda hopped out of her car with surprising agility and ran around to the sidewalk. "I've wanted so much to talk to you," she said. "I've tried any number of times one way or another to get hold of you, but of course, busy as you are, you're hard to capture."

"Yes, I've been busy," said Honor.

She had always liked Matilda, and for a while there, in the beginning, they had been good friends, constantly together. But Honor wasn't going to let that effect her now. Matilda was her enemy, as Blakesley was her enemy.

"I've wanted to tell you a great many times how wonderful I thought you were," Matilda said. "A lot of us have wanted to do what you did to Blakesley, but I guess we never had the courage."

Honor couldn't believe her ears. "You mean?"

"I mean that I'm with you lock, stock and barrel. A lot of us are with you. Look, I can give you a list and you can talk with them." She glanced around. "There's a coffee shop over there. Let's go over and have a cup of coffee, and I'll tell you what's on my mind."

Honor thought quickly, balancing the caution she had felt in the beginning with the tremendous triumph it would be to know by name the erstwhile enemies she could now rely on.

"Did you know Clay had come over to your side?" Matilda said. "He gave a rousing talk for you at the Guild Hall last night. Didn't you know that?"

"No," said Honor.

"Well, he did. Took people off their feet. Said he'd been a blind fool all

these years, but that you had opened his eyes." She opened the door of the coffee shop and they went in. "Here's a table right here. . . Is this all right? Do you want some waffles with your coffee? They're extra good here."

"Yes, waffles," said Honor. "But this is my party."

Somehow she had a strong feeling that she didn't want Matilda to pay any check for her. She was strictly paying her own way, standing on her own feet. Nobody was going to be able to say afterward that they had even bought her a cup of coffee and a waffle—just in case there was something in this that didn't meet the eye.

CHAPTER XV

THE TEMPTRESS



SOON the coffee came, and the waffles and the syrup. And Matilda talked on.

"Peters is your man—do you remember Peters? And Courtney will vote for you. And then there's Jamison and McBride and both those men carry a lot of votes with them. Well"—she laughed a little bit—"here are the waffles and let's talk about something else. I suppose you're getting a new outfit to have your picture taken in when you receive the returns? Although you're so pretty, Honor, you don't need special clothes. Your smile is enough for any picture." Matilda's smile wasn't so bad itself, warm and friendly, and impulsively she reached across the table and squeezed Honor's hand. "Oh, I'm so *glad* I've been able to tell you how I feel about you," she said happily. "It's been like an unexploded explosion inside of me for days."

"Well, I'm glad you do feel that way," Honor said. "It helps a lot."

But her tone was not too enthusiastic. She still couldn't get over the feeling that caution was necessary.

"To get back to that dress you ought to get for your press pictures," Matilda said. "There's a darling in Armsdell's window—it would just suit you—for

seventy-five dollars."

"Seventy-five dollars is a lot of money," said Honor.

"But it's a beautiful dress," insisted Matilda. "Why don't you go look at it? It's in the window and it's almost across the street."

Honor shook her head and finished her waffle. The check came and she reached for it. She didn't know why it seemed so important that she pay the check, or why the need for caution was still shouting inside of her.

"Darling!" Matilda said. "I'll pay the check. I brought you here."

"I'll pay it," said Honor firmly, and took a bill out of her purse.

Matilda shrugged slim shoulders. "All right," she said. "Let's not quarrel about the price. Of course I'll accept it if it's worth that much to you."

"It is," said Honor, and she pushed back her chair and went to the cashier's desk, feeling as if she'd won a victory.

Then she saw the clock.

"Oh, my goodness," she said to Matilda, "I've got to run. Good-by, and thanks a lot."

"Can't I drop you somewhere?" Matilda was sweetly anxious.

"Thanks—I'm just going around the corner," said Honor. And she ran.

Jim and David—and of course Bettina—were waiting at their usual table, and Honor dropped into the fourth chair. Excitement was bubbling now that Matilda wasn't around to freeze her with the suspicion and caution she couldn't seem to help. She suddenly laughed out loud, her eyes shining.

"What do you think made me late?" She saw interest sparkle in their eyes and laughed again. "Matilda Gregson has come over to our side! I've got a list of Blakesley's men who have come over with her!" She whipped the piece of paper from her bag to wave in front of their faces.

For a swift, breathless second they stared at her blankly. Then Jim snorted.

"Like my great aunt's first husband's second wife's kittens she has! Let me see that list."

He grabbed it from Honor's fingers and scanned it. David peered over his shoulder. Both their faces were set and intent.

Finally Jim looked up and his eyes bit into Honor's.

"Tell us what happened," he said.

"Tell every word," said David. "Don't leave out a thing. Got a paper and pencil? Bettina can take it down."

So Honor told it as it had happened, and Bettina took it down in shorthand. When it was finished they read it over slowly.

"She mentions the men who are going to vote for Honor," Jim said.

"Look," David said. "She says seventy-five dollars for a dress, but in that spot she doesn't mention the dress and when she does use the word it could be cut out."

"And Honor says seventy-five dollars is a lot of money," Jim pointed out. He groaned.

"What have I done?" Honor said, in a sick voice.

"Maybe nothing," David said comfortingly. "But if there was a dictaphone anywhere around and they got a record of that conversation and they chopped it up, using the pieces they wanted to use, it would look as if you'd bought those men Matilda mentioned for seventy-five dollars apiece."

"No!" whispered Honor.

BUT she knew it was true. It could be done. You could run off parts of a record onto another record just as you could cut out film on a strip of pictures.

"Maybe I can find out," David said, and got up and went out with Jim trailing him.

"I'm sorry for you, Honor," Bettina said. "I'm so sorry I don't know what to say."

"Then don't say anything," snapped Honor. The two girls sat there chewing their lips.

Jim and David came back looking solemn.

"Nothing short of a court trial is going to make the owner of that coffee shop talk," David said. "He's a Blakesley man and if they wanted to buy him out and put a dictaphone under that table they could do it." He sat down at the table. "Well, let's eat."

But nobody wanted to eat, so they got up and went out.

"I'm going back to the paper and see

what can be done," Jim said.

"We won't know what has to be done till we see what they do," David said. "Maybe we're barking up an empty tree." He added, "I've got to get back to the office. I've got a client waiting there for me."

"I'll go with you," said Bettina, slipping her hand through his arm.

"I've got a thousand things to do," said Honor, with loud defiance, and she almost ran away from them.

"A fine thing," she thought furiously as she stamped down the street, "a fine thing. All your friends are busy the minute you make a fool of yourself. They stick along as long as things go well but just the second it looks black they scurry."

A taxi passed and she hailed it. Better get off the street and out of the public eye before she began to bawl. Better get home where she could be herself and cry her eyes out and kick the furniture if she wanted to.

So she went home.

At five o'clock she went out to gather in the afternoon papers. She brought them back and slapped them down on the living room floor so that the headlines could stare up at her all at once. There it was. Big black letters making faces at her and calling her names. She had tried to bribe Blakesley's friends. She had tried to buy their votes. And if anybody didn't believe it they could go down to Bill Frayne's office where, as D. A., he was holding the record in his safe.

"My friend," said Honor out loud. "The good old D. A."

The phone rang. It was David.

"What are you doing at home?" he barked at her. "Moping and feeling sorry for yourself? And what do you think that's going to get you? Get up and out. Go where people can see you. Get mad about this thing and fight back. Are you—"

"I know," said Honor. "Am I a politician or a baby? You asked me that once before."

"All right," David was still roaring. "Well, which are you? I'm asking you again. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to love you," Honor thought, "forever and ever. I love you

even when you're mad at me. I love you when I know you can't see anyone but Bettina. I just love you anyhow."

"Are you still there, Honor?" David said, and his tone was softer.

"Yes, I'm here." She sounded the way she felt; doleful, abandoned.

"Honor," David said. "Oh, my glory, Honor, I can't—" There was something in his tone that turned her heart, making her breathless.

"David—David, what—" she said, and she waited, not knowing what she was waiting for.

There was a small silence then he said, "Nothing. Nothing, Honor. Don't forget you're due at Briggs' banquet at seven-thirty. I'll stop by for you."

"Is Briggs still giving the banquet, after this?" she said.

"Sure he is," David said, "and everybody's coming. You're not licked. So stick your chin up and make faces at 'em. I'll be seeing you."

Honor cradled the phone and began to move around the room. She knew why she didn't feel like fighting. She knew why she felt licked. It was because victory, no victory on earth, would mean a thing to her if she couldn't have David to share it. Nothing meant anything without him. Life meant nothing. She went into the bedroom slowly and heavily, preparing to get dressed. . . .

DAVID came for her at seven and he gave her one look.

"Hey! Cheer up. How do you think you're going to convince anyone of your integrity if you look like gloom?"

"I'll be all right," said Honor. "I'll turn it on when the time comes."

She handed her topper to David and he slipped her into it. Then, suddenly, his hands were tight on her shoulders and he was whirling her around to face him.

"See if this'll cheer you up," he said, and kissed her.

Her breath caught, her heart stopped, she was lifted on silver wings and tossed on rosy clouds. Champagne was in her veins and love was an ecstasy exploding in her heart.

"There," said David, pushing her away a little. "See if that'll put fight and flame into you."

"Oh!" Honor stamped her foot. "You—you—" Rage strangled her. A kiss that had opened heaven for her and been nothing but a trick to him. "I—I hate you!" she cried, and dashed out the door and down the stairs not waiting for the elevator.

Her rage carried over into the evening. She blazed through the banquet, the anger she felt at David she poured out against Blakesley and Matilda and the thing they had done to her. She was fire and flame and fury, and when she finally went home the applause and the cheers were still ringing in her ears.

But that didn't mean the election was won. Seven hundred people at the banquet applauding her didn't mean twenty-eight thousand voters would give her enough votes to get her in. She went to sleep realizing that, and when she woke up it was election morning.

David and Jim and Bettina came and they went down to the polls to cast their votes together.

"We've got a car loaded with flowers," David said, "and you drive around in it looking beautiful and reminding people who they should vote for. I'll see you later."

So she rode around, bowing and smiling, and people waved at her. And after an endless period the day was over.

The returns said she was doing pretty well, but pretty well wasn't winning, and she didn't care. The life had gone out of her when David had kissed her and it didn't matter to him. She didn't care about anything now. She supposed she would pick up things and go on eventually. People talked about what wonders Time did for you. And maybe it did. But just this minute she didn't believe it.

It was five o'clock when she stopped riding around and went home. She would stay home till the returns were all in, and if anybody rang the bell she wouldn't let them in. That was the way she felt.

She went up the walk to her apartment house door and opened it.

David pulled himself out of the deep chair that he used to fall asleep in while he waited for her.

"Gadding around," he said. "Don't you ever come home?" It was just the

way he used to say it.

"David!" Honor choked on his name and couldn't say more. Oh, if this were only entirely the way it used to be, with David laughing at her and teasing her and loving her.

"Don't I get invited up for a cup of coffee?" he said. "I'm a hungry man."

"Of course come up," said Honor. And she thought, "Yes, come up if you like, but don't kiss me again. I can't stand it unless you mean it." Aloud she said, "How's Bettina?"

"Happy." He held the elevator door for her and she went in. "Bettina's a cute kid. She and Jim ought to be very happy together. They're well suited."

"Bettina and—Jim?" Honor stared at him.

"Sure," said David. "I thought you knew."

"You know darned well I didn't know," said Honor. "You knew I thought it was you in love with Bettina and—"

"The elevator's stopped," said David. "Shall we get out or stay in?"

HONOR whirled out into the hall. "You knew I thought you were in love with Bettina! You made me think so. You did it on purpose."

"Sure I did," said David. "If you'd

known I loved you your campaign would have gone completely to pot. Neither one of us would even have known there was a campaign. But this way—"

"This way I got so heartbroken I could hardly live! Oh, you were very smart. I got so mad at you!"

"And look at the fire it put into your speeches," said David. "You did fine."

"Say!" Honor stopped at her front door and faced him. "Did you say you loved me?"

"I sure do," said David. "I've nearly gone batty pulling this trick on you and now—"

"Now," said Honor, "for a man who's in love with a girl you're wasting an awful lot of time."

"So I am," said David. And he stopped wasting it.

Hours later, David was proved to be perfectly right in his theory. For when the returns were all in and the final announcement was made, Honor, looking at the candlelight move over David's face as they ate a late dinner, didn't even hear it.

It wasn't till later that night, when David had gone home and wasn't around to kiss her any more that Honor discovered she had won the election.


"And I've won David too," she told herself. "I'm good."



Vocalist Carol Baxter, darling of the night clubs, climbs
up the ladder of love to success and happiness in

She Shall Have Music
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NEXT ISSUE'S FASCINATING COMPLETE ROMANTIC NOVEL!



Harriet whirled around
at the sound of a fa-
miliar voice—and Sam
stood there

HOSPITAL NURSE

CHAPTER I

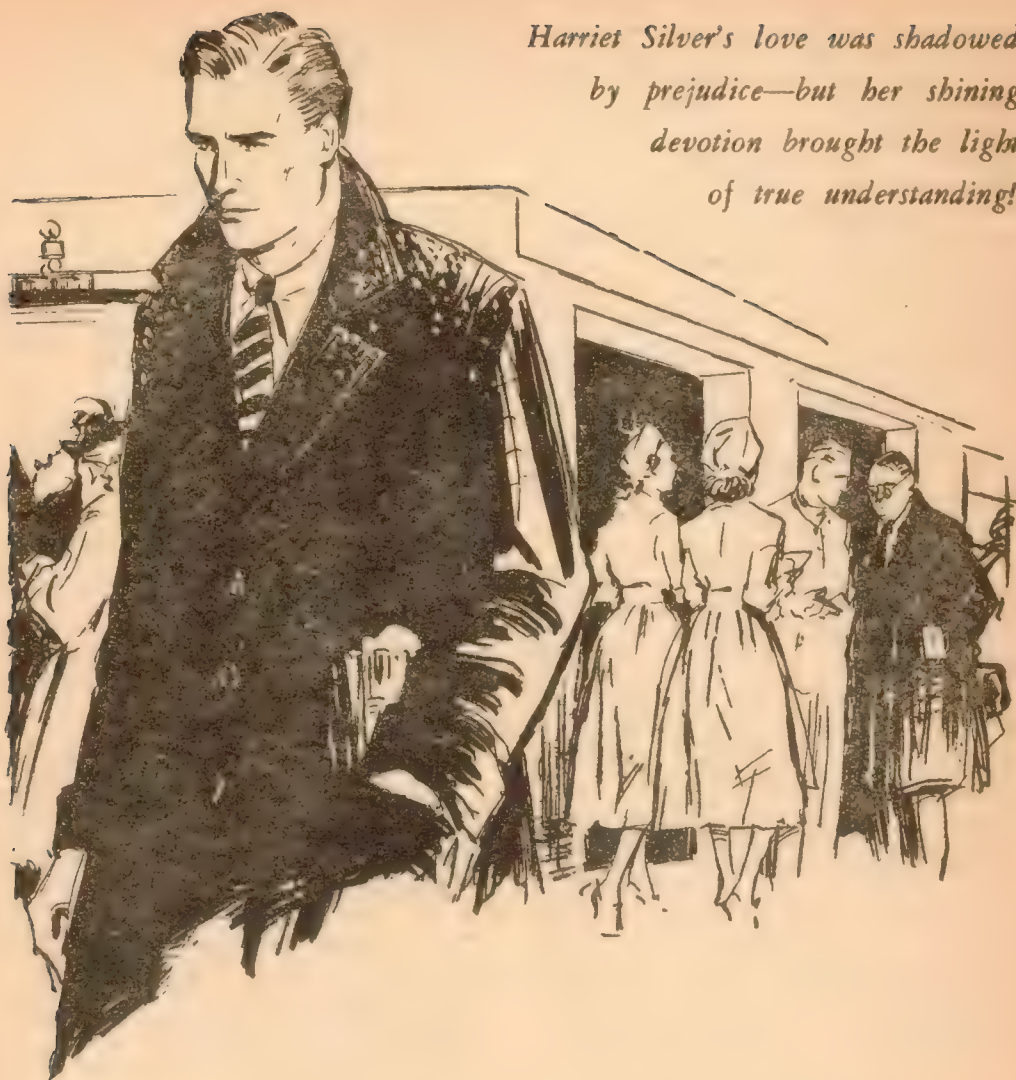
BIRTH OF HATRED

HARRIET SILVER put the Reilly baby back in its basket. She drew the blue coverlet up until nothing showed but a red and wrinkled face topped by a halo of orange fuzz.

Promptly the baby subsided into the snug warmth of his nest and slept.

Harriet smiled down, reaching behind her curly brown head to tie the strings of her gauze mask tighter. "You're a cute little mite," she murmured.

A whimper rose from the adjoining basket. Harriet slid an experienced



*Harriet Silver's love was shadowed
by prejudice—but her shining
devotion brought the light
of true understanding!*

a compelling novelet by **LILY K. SCOTT**

hand beneath its pink blanket.

"Elizabeth Jackson! Again?" She shook her head in mock despair. "Your mommy's going to have her hands full when she gets *you* home, young lady!"

Harriet laughed into the tiny brown face. Beneath the chocolate button of a nose, Elizabeth Jackson's mouth formed

an "O" of outrage against conditions, as Harriet laid the infant on her table for a "change."

A sudden sharp tapping at the glass in the nursery door brought her glance up abruptly. She smiled, waving back at the nice-looking face mouthing something at her.

"Wait!" She motioned. "Be right there!"

And already her heart was pounding with anticipation. There would be news. Ed Moriarty would have—*something* to tell her. About himself, yes. But mostly about Sam.

Yet, already she was trying not to think, "Why didn't Sam come himself?"

Her capable hands flew through Elizabeth Jackson's change. She laid the baby back in her basket and headed for the door, pausing only to turn the Patterson pride-and-joy, and to pull the coverlet higher on the Kaminsky twins.

Then she was through the door, tugging at her white mask.

"Well?" she breathed, staring up at the gangling Moriarty with expectant eyes.

Ed Moriarty didn't answer at once. Harriet saw his prominent Adam's apple climb a notch, then slowly descend.

At length, "Looks like I'm in, kid," he said, a shadow of a grin flickering across his mouth. "Had a telegram from Darnley, your Chief of Service, this morning. My application's been accepted. I sign my contract for internship in the next ten days."

"I'm—so glad for you," Harriet whispered, and she was. But why wasn't he saying something about Sam?

A SENSE of foreboding held in check the questions that rushed to her lips. But as long as he didn't say, "Sam did *not* get a telegram," there was the chance that Ed was holding the best news for last.

"And Sam?" she demanded excitedly.

But there was no response in the gray eyes that stared back. Harriet's soft lips quivered.

"Ed, wasn't there even—one—telegram?"

Moriarty shook his head slowly. "Not one. And there won't be any. They all go out from the various hospitals on the same day, you know." Then, with an unexpected burst of emotion: "Harriet! Don't look at me like that! That's the way Sam looked when only one wire came to our room—to Moriarty, not to Hellman. For heaven's sake, Harriet, do you think I feel it's right and fair, what's back of this? Sam Hellman's the

best friend I've got. We went through grade school, through high school, Pre-Med, and Med together. When we applied for internship here, it wasn't only because they've got the best obstetrical department in the city. We wanted to go the whole way together. We applied to five other hospitals, hoping whichever accepted would take us both. This was the only one that came through."

"And not one came through for Sam," Harriet said tonelessly.

"Listen, honey," Ed broke in swiftly. "It's the phoniest set-up I ever heard of. Sam's grades have been higher than mine straight through. He was always near the top of the class . . . Do you know this bird Darnley well, who did the picking?"

Harriet nodded. She knew him—well. And he knew what it would mean for Harriet Silver if Sam Hellman came through. And what it would mean, now that he had not come through, was suddenly years away, unreal with distance.

"Who else is coming here?" she asked impulsively.

"Drake got a wire, and so did Conley and Rider," he said shortly, and added, a trace of bitterness tinging his tone. "Moscowitz didn't. Neither did Strauss, though Smith managed to slip through despite his poor record."

"Mortimer Smith's father just came through with a donation for the new incinerator system the hospital's been crying for," Harriet remarked with apparent irrelevance.

Ed snorted. "Trouble with Sam, he didn't pick the right father."

But Harriet was thinking, "So mostly, that's it. Not even for me, could Neal Darnley overlook his prejudices."

"How's Sam feeling?" she asked.

"You better go over there as soon as you're free, kid. I can't do a thing with him. Sam's gone behind a wall, and he won't come out. Maybe he will for you."

"He'll come out," Harriet said quietly.

Hurrying out of uniform later, she was not nearly so sure.

There was something deeply sensitive about Sam Hellman. Big and gaunt, verging on plainness, he had a way of saying things that leaped out unexpectedly, like a bright flower blooming in a city lot. Like the time he told her

why he meant to specialize in obstetrics.

"It's the thrill of bringing a new life into the world," he said. "Then for a little space, it's just God and Sam Hellman. Me waiting for Him to finish His job and to whisper: 'Okay, Hellman. Take it from here.'"

Racing through the purple November twilight, Harriet wondered if Neal Darnley had ever had such a thought.

When she had been Neal's secretary, before it occurred to her that what she really wanted in a career was right out there on the hospital floor, Harriet had come to know the Chief of Service better than most of the girls at Creighton General Hospital did. Neal Darnley was an important figure to the hospital staff. To Harriet he was a lonely man, absorbed in his work, having few outside interests.

SHE remembered an evening more than four years ago, when he had approached her and fumblingly suggested a show. Harriet had known intuitively the effort it cost him to speak casually. How long he had waited to ask her, she could only guess by his eagerness when she smiled acceptance.

She had gone on that date, and on others, too. Twice, toward the end of the first month, he had kissed her, and with a slow stirring to life of passions long restrained.

Yet, his arms about her, his handsome face, his cultured bearing, his distinguished appearance—all had left her cold. She had endured his kisses because she had dreaded hurting him.

Then, almost imperceptibly, something began to develop in Neal—a possessive spirit, a jealous streak, and Harriet had begun saying "no" to his repeated invitations. It was the purest coincidence that Sam Hellman had come into her life exactly then. But when the lean young medical student began showing up twice and three times a week at office-closing, Neal Darnley had drawn his own conclusions.

"He's never liked Sam," Harriet mused as she sighted the house where Sam and Ed Moriarty roomed. "He's always imagined Sam got me to go in for nursing."

She cast the gloomy thoughts from

her mind. Sam was feeling low enough without having her drop in on him with her chin brushing his rug.

Still when his big frame loomed in his doorway, Harriet thought for a moment he hardly seemed affected at all. He grinned at her, though if the light had been stronger, she might have noticed that the shadows never left his eyes.

"Hi!" She laughed, panting after three flights of walk-up. "Greetings and commiserations, darling!"

"Pull up a chair, mouse," Sam said. "Let's get on with the post-mortem."

"Not a chance," she declared firmly. "We're out on the town tonight. We dine. We dance. We—celebrate!"

Sam's wide mouth quirked cynically. "Celebrate what, kid?"

"Celebrate because we've got folks like Ed Moriarty pulling for us," she returned promptly.

Sam suddenly jammed his hands into his pockets with an air of irritation. Staring through the window, his back to Harriet, he spoke through tight lips.

"Listen, kid, you're so confounded starry-eyed, you sound like the lines out of a play. I hate dramatics!"

"And I hate pessimism!" she countered. "After all, you're not washed up. You can apply to other hospitals."

"What good will it do?" he demanded. "Don't you know the cards are stacked? With people like Neal Darnley and their prejudices to buck up against—"

"Neal Darnley doesn't head every hospital. Besides, don't think you can sit back and expect people like Neal magically to forget those prejudices. Neal was reared on prejudices. He had them served up for breakfast, lunch and dinner. From the time he was a little boy."

Sam whirled. "Are you making excuses for him?"

"I'm only trying to show you—"

"You've been dating him again, haven't you?" Hellman broke in acidly.

"Only once last week," Harriet replied coolly. "I told you I was going to. He was so horribly lonely."

Sam threw his hands out impatiently. "That bird was born lonely! Anyway, it's a first rate excuse for going to expensive places where I can't take you!"

"I've heard about enough of this,"

Harriet broke in brusquely. "You're looking at everything distorted."

"On the contrary," he assured her, "for the first time I think I'm seeing things in their proper light. Not that I blame you much," he added, with a bitter little laugh. "You're in solid there, and you have been for years. I guess a man can overlook his prejudices for a pretty face and figure."

"SAM!"

A moment she stared at him doubtfully. Then she rushed to his arms. But they did not open for her. They hung lifelessly at his sides while she tugged imploringly at his sleeves.

"Darling!" she half sobbed. "Don't let's quarrel. You didn't mean that. You're frightfully overwrought!"

But his lips would not soften, nor his wintry eyes grow warm.

"Please, honey," she murmured, "why should this come between us?"

"It shouldn't!" he said crisply. "But as long as you're going to defend a man like Darnley, who'd like to see us *all* broken, that's not loyalty, and we're through!"

With a gesture of finality, he loosened her grip and moved back to the window. Harriet stared at his broad shoulders a dull hopeless moment. If only he had held her close, if only his lips had found hers, there would not now be that awful vacuum through which she must walk as though suspended in space.

Once, softly, with trembling lips, she called his name, for she did not believe it was possible to walk through the door and close it forever between them. But he did not respond. And Harriet found it was quite possible—even with the ice closing in around her heart.

BLIGHTED HOPES



THE maternity ward is the most cheerful place in a hospital, because nobody is really sick, and every woman in every bed has her own private happiness to dwell upon. If they weren't

quietly reading or fixing their hair or chatting, they were exchanging jokes or ribbing each other and the nurses.

It was a jolly place, but this morning, to Harriet, the thought of entering it seemed unbearable. She did not begrudge those women their glowing happiness. But the sight of it would only heighten her misery.

For the night had been a sleepless torment haunted by crowding memories.

There had been times when she had known that marriage to Sam Hellman lay far in the future. But there had never been a time when she dreamed of that future without him. Now for the first time, the years stretched vacantly before her.

And what of the plans they had laid? What of the hours they had spent blue-printing the future, a year at this, two years at that—"and some time that house among the hills you love—and maybe if we work hard enough, a small hospital, run the way we know it should be run—and—oh Sam, Sam, have you forgotten the first night you took me in your arms and pressed me close until I felt your heart pounding (or was it mine?), and you whispered: 'For keeps, kid?' And I kissed you, and you knew."

Finished, now. Disloyal, he had called her. Because she tried to show him that hatred breeds only hatred.

"But it's true," she thought defiantly as she lifted a squalling infant and headed for the ward. "If people like Neal and people like Sam could only forget to be 'different.' If they could meet each other simply like two members of the *human* race, how long would those 'differences' last?"

But she sighed. "Too much to hope

LOOK FORWARD TO

THE OLD HOUSE

A Novelet of
Springtime Romance

By RUTH IVES

COMING NEXT ISSUE

for," she murmured inwardly.

Yet at the door of the ward, she paused. "Or is it?" she wondered, the faintest smile brushing her lips.

The ladies, as she entered with the Jensen baby, were just introducing themselves to a young Italian mother who was being congratulated on the birth of a son.

"A boy? Fine, fine, good!" Harriet identified Mrs. Kaminsky's singsong voice through the lively babble. "By me is always girls, but maybe next time—"

"Nex' time?" a high-pitched voice chimed in gaily, and Harriet recognized brown-skinned Helen Jackson, small Elizabeth's mother. "You fixin' to have a nex' time, Miz Kaminsky?"

"Until the doctor says 'Mrs. K, it's a boy!' there will always be a next time," the mother of the plump twins announced, and the others shrieked with laughter.

As Harriet approached Mrs. Jensen with her hungry infant, she knew an unexpected lift, like the faintest ray of sunlight pricking through a sullen storm cloud.

"The women can do it," she thought grimly. "They're doing it all the time in places like this." She settled the baby comfortably in the crook of its mother's arm. "If men could only share a great common experience like women do, they'd soon forget to be 'different'."

What was it Sam had said once? "Yes," she recalled, hastening after the next famished baby, "he said, 'Sometimes it happens in wars, when everybody's sharing the same miseries. All at once, they find they're calling on the same God'."

Her throat went thick, remembering. Sam had been so gentle, so deeply understanding in those days. What was to become of him now, viewing life through a murky fog of distrust?

All through that week, Harriet moved mechanically from chore to chore, aware as if for the first time that the work she was doing was heavy to the point of drudgery.

Badly overcrowded, with beds overflowing into hallways, Creighton General struggled along with a shortage of help that taxed the strength and nerves of its nurses to breaking point.

TO HARRIET SILVER, it was as though she had suddenly awakened to these appalling realities. There was something fearful about cots lined up outside doorways that should be left clear. There was something dreadful, beyond mere unsightliness, about the way the halls overflowed with discarded dressings and bandages to be carted away—but left there for hours simply because there wasn't help enough to do it.

"At least that will be changed before long," Harriet thought moodily one afternoon. "Those new incinerators young Smith's father is paying for will be mighty welcome."

She swung through the nursery doors to be met by the ceaseless wailing of the babies. It was getting near feeding time and they, as usual, were on schedule. She was startled to see a tall, broad-shouldered man leave off staring through the window and approach her.

"Neal!"

The name fell from her lips in a reluctant whisper. Neal Darnley, black hair liberally brushed with gray, pale eyes narrowed and penetrating, seemed a veritable master of any situation. Yet, as he stared in silence at the slender young nurse, there was little of the well-poised executive about him.

"I've been leaving messages for you every day, Harriet," he said. "Why haven't you come to see me?"

How could she tell him why? How could she tell him of the flood of bitterness his act had unleashed? And would it mean to Neal Darnley that Sam Hellman's bright hopes were blighted, and with them, hers, too? Would it mean anything that Sam, and even Ed Moriarty, were treating her like an outcast?

Only yesterday she had run into Ed in the hall, and he had greeted her, but not with the old brotherly warmth, not with the rare delight of an old friend. She had flinched at the cool politeness of his tone. His eyes had hinted at some vague distrust of her.

And when he had gone, she remembered that she hadn't asked about Sam, and had known that if she had, he would probably have replied in the same cold, formal phrases he used to discuss the weather.

In a way, Ed's coldness was harder to take than Sam's angry accusations. And now he had withdrawn from her behind the same barrier that Sam had reared. So it was with a sick heart that Harriet met Neal Darnley's question, "Why haven't you come to see me?"

"I—I couldn't—" she began with simple honesty, but regretted it an instant later. For Neal took a swift step toward her and grasped her hand in an imploring gesture.

"I've got to talk to you, Harriet. I've got things to say I can't say here."

Harriet lifted a warning finger to her lips. Across his shoulder, she saw Miss Farlan, the relief nurse, coming on duty. "I'll drop in when I'm through," she whispered hurriedly. "See you later."

He looked at her doubtfully. "You—will?"

Harriet grimaced. "I said I would," she replied impatiently, angry at his everlasting suspicion. She thought, "He doesn't trust anybody! No wonder he's lonely!"

Neal turned and strode from the nursery followed by Miss Farlan's speculative stare.

"I'm ready to die now," that little lady declared. "I've seen everything—little Red Riding Hood."

But Harriet was in no mood for pleasantries. The last thing she wanted today was a heart-to-heart talk with Neal. He was going to get emotional, and Harriet was up to here with emotion.

Everything, every little grievance, seemed magnified. Even the setting up of two more cots that morning in the passageway seemed an outrage, and filled her with inexplicable apprehension.

"It's dangerous, dangerous," she murmured, as she came off duty and headed to the elevator. "You can't get near a door without falling over patients. And those messy dressings! And visitors so careless—a cigarette butt—a smouldering match . . ." Harriet shuddered.

OUTSIDE a damp snow was falling with dreary monotony. It did nothing to lift her spirits. With a sense of weary resignation, she tapped softly at Neal's office door. It was flung open at

once, and Darnley's pale eyes flickered a shade brighter at sight of her.

"I've been waiting for you," he said, closing the door as she stepped into the room.

Harriet sat down in a leather chair beside his desk, all too conscious of the oddly adolescent tremor in his tone. He fumbled a package of cigarettes from a drawer and offered one. Harriet shook her head and Darnley placed one between his own lips. He sat down then, his eyes never leaving her white face.

"How about dinner, some place quiet and pleasant?" he asked.

"Sorry," she declined. "Not tonight, Neal. Don't feel up to it."

Darnley took a long drag at his cigarette. When he spoke again, his voice was edged with sullenness. "You've been avoiding me, Harriet. Don't deny it. Why?"

"Neal—" she began helplessly, casting about for some reply.

But he did not wait. He reared to his feet and broke into a flood of words, staring down at her from his fine height.

"I've done everything I know to make you like me, Harriet. I've begged you to marry me until I must have seemed absurd in your eyes. Nothing seems to win you. But I can take that, if you tell me you don't love me enough to marry me, as long as I know by your eyes that you *like* me. What I can't take is what has come over you in the past week. All at once, it's as though you hate me! Why? What have I done to make you hate me? Why must every ounce of your affection go to—him?"

The last burst forth in an excess of jealousy, as though against his will it slashed through a carefully woven net of restraint.

"You mean Sam Hellman?" Harriet said evenly. And if Neal Darnley had known her just a little better, he would have taken warning from the deadly quiet of her tone.

"Yes, Sam Hellman," he blundered, his fine lips curling a trifle.

"I'll tell you why," Harriet replied in the same low tones. "Because Sam hasn't always despised his fellowmen, like you have, Neal. He's trusted them, and loved them, and been a friend to them all—regardless of race or creed."

Her voice broke like a snapped twig. Suddenly it came to her she was talking about a man who no longer existed. For Sam Hellman had learned to despise and to distrust. A little more, and he would surely learn to hate.

She brought her clear gaze to meet Neal Darnley's.

"What a pity it is," she said, "to destroy those qualities in a man by blasting his hopes with your own high-handed prejudices—because you are in a position to do so!"

CHAPTER III

MAN BEHIND A MASK



DARNLEY stared into Harriet's small, upturned face, understanding birthing in his gray eyes.

"So that's it!" he scoffed. "If that isn't just like his kind! Our intern quota is filled. I

have to turn down his application, and he runs snivelling to you with outraged cries of 'Discrimination!'"

Harriet rose, facing him squarely across the mahogany desk. In her blue-black eyes, tiny flames sparked to life, fanned by the fury that quivered through her.

"Neal Darnley," she said, scarcely above a whisper, "I've known you for a man of strong opinions, and iron-clad prejudice. But I've never known you to lie!"

He fell back as though she had slapped him. But she went on rapidly:

"Speak of filled quotas to outsiders, but not to me. I worked for you. Your quotas have always had a remarkable way of filling up each time a foreign sounding name cropped up in an application. Except," she added pointedly, "when good business made it expedient to favor the son or the friend of someone who had just donated a gift to the hospital."

She paused, deliberately watching his face flush with anger. Then—

"This is America, Neal. And every name within its borders is American re-

gardless of the way it's spelled. We are stronger, here, because we are mixed. For every race has some good to offer every other. This is the last stronghold of tolerance, of decency, and of justice, and it's going to remain that way in spite of everything snobbery and intolerance can do—because the American people want it that way!"

Neal Darnley waved an impatient hand. "You're talking the purest drivel, Harriet," he snapped. "If I were as bad as you make me out, why would I be so crazy to marry you—you who are one of them. Haven't I always shown you as much affection and respect as I would one of my own kind?"

"Yes, you have!" she replied quickly, eagerly. "You have, because I'm the only one of 'my kind' that you've allowed yourself to *know*. And to your bewilderment, you've found that I'm no different from any of your own kind. Neal, if you'd let yourself associate with the rest of us, and meet us halfway, you'd soon forget there is 'your kind' and 'our kind'."

Harriet was pleading with him now. But suddenly he swung around and strode to his wide window. When he spoke, it was with his back to her.

"Bosh!" he muttered. "You don't understand. You—you alone, Harriet, you're different. But the rest—" He shrugged. "I can't help it. I never could move on a level plane with them. Oh, I don't *expect* you to understand. You're not old stock American like I am. If your people had crossed the Atlantic on the Mayflower—"

"My people crossed the Red Sea with Moses!"

Darnley whirled, speechless a moment, then turned back to his window with twitching lips. "Yes—but that's not what I mean. That's not important here."

"Not important?" she echoed. "Is *this* important, Neal?" She paused, threw her head back as though remembering. Then her low voice filled the room, and her words trembled in the air long after she was silent: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty

and the pursuit of happiness'."

He was still so long, she thought he meant to ignore her. Softly, she added:

"Your ancestors wrote that, Neal, a hundred and seventy years ago. Mine have been dreaming of it for two thousand!"

Still he did not reply, did not move. Sighing, she turned to go, thinking how feebly her words had beaten on his consciousness, like the flutter of wings upon a glass pane. The click of the door-knob beneath her touch brought him whirling around, a cry on his lips:

"Harriet—wait!" A moment, and he stood there before her his arms encircling her. "Don't go. Not until you tell me—is that the reason you won't marry me? Because I'm something of a snob, as you call it?"

SHE shook her head slowly, her eyes filling again with the compassion he always aroused in her. "No, Neal. It's still the same old story. I can't marry you because I don't seem to love you as much—"

"As much as you love him," he finished for her.

Harriet nodded. "I guess that's it. As for the snobbery, Neal, it's like a screen you've built around yourself. Almost anybody can see through it, you know. I've seen through it."

"Have you?" he asked, curiously. "What did you see?"

She pondered before replying. Then, with a sad smile: "I saw a small boy at a wonderful party; a little bit lonely, though, because nobody seemed very friendly, and a little bit worried, too. Afraid he was missing out on something big. Because everybody seemed to be having fun, except him. And simply because he was afraid to hold out his hand."

Abruptly Darnley's arms dropped to his sides. His mouth curved in a cynical smile. Shrugging, he reached for the cigarettes on his desk, placed one between his lips. He struck a match and held it to the tip, speaking from the corner of his mouth.

"Very pretty, honey," he said with caustic emphasis. "Only that kind of sentiment leaves me ice-cold!"

"That's a pity, Neal," Harriet re-

marked. "It's so pleasant sometimes to be warm—only the chances are, you'll never know."

And as she closed the door, the last thing she saw was the flame of Neal's match trembling, before he could get his light.

"So something I said struck home," Harriet pondered as she stepped down the corridor toward the elevator. But then she shrugged hopelessly. "Not that it means much. People like Neal don't change simply because somebody gives them a lecture they don't want in the first place. It takes something big to change them."

She pressed the elevator button. There was something she had forgotten to tell Miss Farlan about the formulas. She would do that right now, then head for home. Her finger still on the button, she whirled around at sound of a familiar voice.

"Sam!"

He stood behind her, the snow clinging in wet dabs to his coat, for he had just entered through the revolving doors.

"Hello, kid," he said, his dark eyes fixed on her eager face. "I came by to tell you I'm sorry—for the temper tantrum. I was kind of upset."

"Oh, darling!" she breathed, and her heart soared like a lark in flight. Her eyes were large and shining, and he must have seen how full of hope.

But all at once, he seemed unable to go on. Harriet waited, the pulse throbbing wildly in her throat. She wanted terribly to reach out and touch him, to take him in her arms. Yet, something in his expression restrained her. Of a sudden, she was unaccountably afraid to hear more.

Then he began again, the words stumbling from his lips, "Look—I'm checking out. Leaving town. Figured you'd want to know."

Harriet made no reply, because his words seemed to convey no meaning. Abruptly she wished she could sit down. Her knees felt like water. It came to her all in a rush that Sam was going away, for good—not just for a week-end, or a month.

She heard herself query in a small voice: "Why?"

Sam shrugged. She saw his teeth bite down hard on his lower lip.

"I don't know," he muttered, his face working painfully. "I figure it would do me good to get out of the city a while. See something of the country. You know, sort of hobo it a while—"

"Why not stay right around here," she broke in warily, a new uneasiness gnawing in her heart. Sam was covering up—something. "Why not stay long enough to apply to other hospitals again in a few months like I told you."

Sam turned from her and stared down the corridor. He seemed to be groping for words.

"I don't know, Harriet," he finally said. "It doesn't seem important anymore. I'm all mixed up inside. I want to get away. It's not just—being turned down at this hospital. It's—"

HE BROUGHT his gaze back to her anxious face. In the depths of his dark eyes, Harriet fathomed the struggle of unknown forces. The strain of their battle told in the rippling muscles of his cheeks, the workings of his lips. Then his eyes filled with a great kindness.

Harriet, watching the slow sweet smile creep into his face, reached out and clasped his hands in hers. He would kiss her now, and the wracking storms would be stilled. He would hold her in his arms, yes, even here, in this public place, and the fabric of her life would be miraculously whole again, instead of twisted and torn.

But he shook his head. Once, before he turned, his lips tightened again in a thin line.

"G'by, kid," he mumbled, and left her.

And he hadn't touched her, she remembered with burning vividness as his tall figure melted into the misty snow beyond the doors. There had been no gesture, not a word, not a look of love. The days of brooding had taken their toll. Love was dead.

Unconsciously, Harriet's hand rose to soothe the lump of pain in her throat. And there it froze.

For in that instant there rang out a cry so blood-chilling, it wiped her mind clean as a slate.

Down through the ancient stairwell,

close beside the elevator, a shrieking voice screamed:

"Fi-i-ire!"

Even in the paralysis of shock, Harriet wondered: "What fool did that?"

She came to her senses with her finger jammed on the up-elevator button, angry at her own stupidity.

"No sense waiting for that!"

She dashed for the stairwell, conscious that already the lobby was a milling mass of humanity running in all directions. The heavy aroma of smoke that hung in the air had crept so insidiously upon them that for some time it must have been all about them, unnoticed.

As she took the stairs on winged feet, her quick mind grasped the situation.

"Visiting hours—everybody's relaxed. Especially the nurses. Some fool visitor discovered the fire and yelled instead of reaching for an extinguisher. Where is it?"

But even as she wondered, her mind was visualizing the oil-soaked, medicated bandages in the L-angled recess on the maternity floor, close beside the stairwell and the elevators.

"Just the same," she panted, turning the third floor landing, "it needn't be too bad. The patients are closer to the fire escapes than to the elevators. And a blaze could hardly get a good start before somebody would be using an extinguisher!"

She had hardly reached the fourth floor before she knew how far from the truth was her reasoning. Everywhere on the floors below, nurses and interns were passing swiftly among the patients, calming them, assuring them—for apart from a thin curling veil of smoke filtering down from above, there could be little danger. Then, half a flight below the maternity floor, she heard a sound that struck terror in her heart.

The sounds of humans in pain, in fear, are not pleasant sounds. But the sounds of humans in panic, of frenzied women battling for the lives of their young is one of the most blood-curdling sounds of all.

The hysterical pandemonium that burst upon Harriet seemed a wildly strident accompaniment to the yellowish smoke which, up here, no longer curled

in transparent veils, but heaved like a writhing monster. Through its boiling clouds, dim and unreal, figures were thrusting forward, falling back, now clearly, now fading.

CHAPTER IV

SAM HELLMAN SERVES



CRIES filled the air interspersed with violent coughing. Cries of anguish, choked off halfway. Cries of rage. A scream. A wildly rising sob.

For just as the wards and other rooms lay to one side of the suffocating smoke, the nursery lay to the other! And every fear-crazed mother was intent on reaching that room. From the instant of the first outcry, the women rose and fought the nurses tooth and nail to get to their babies.

The nurses begged, urged, *shoved* the women to the fire-escapes. In vain they pointed out the nursery girls were on duty, the babies would not be left. The women surged forward. Primitive instinct against common sense.

This initial panic and the resultant delay in using extinguishers gave the blaze a long head start. For in the moment that Harriet reached the fourth floor and plunged into the reeking yellow fog to elbow her way through the shrieking mothers, she sensed this wing, at least, was doomed.

Coughing, choking, eyes smarting, she plunged through the rolling smoke, heard the frightful crackle of the blaze, felt the red blast of it on her cheek, and plunged on. Close behind, winning their way inch by strangling inch, the women followed. But Harriet was intent on reaching the nursery.

"Those babies!" she thought, heart contracting. "Farlan can't do it alone!"

Then she was through the densest of the smoke, through the worst of the gaseous fumes, into somewhat clearer air. Down the hall she raced, and she thrust the door open to run to Farlan's side.

"Nobody here but us?" she gasped at

the wild-eyed, grim-faced girl.

"No one!" Farlan cried. She was an old line nurse, but plainly the task ahead left her aghast. "We've got thirty-seven kids to wrap and get out of here. How's the passage to the fire-escapes?"

"Bad," Harriet said, busying herself at once. "It's not the fire, it's the smoke. And we've got to go through it to get to the exits."

"The stairs?"

Harriet shook her head. "Too close to the blaze. Liable to be in flames any minute."

As if in confirmation, heavy feet pounded through the hall.

"It's in the elevator shaft!" a voice yelled.

"See?" Harriet gasped. "The stairs are next!"

With deft, lightning moves, the girls worked, bundling, tucking in, pinning their tiny charges, oblivious to the riotous din in the outer halls. Once above the clamor, Harriet heard the welcome clang and rumble of fire apparatus. There'd be help—but already the first yellowish tendril of smoke was curling in beneath the door. No time to wait for help!

Now the cries of the stampeding women came close and frighteningly closer.

"All we need in here now," Harriet muttered, meeting Farlan's eyes. "A herd of hysterical women."

"Just let those dames try anything that hurts my babies—" Farlan promised darkly.

Harriet brushed a fallen strand of hair from her sweating brow. "But it must be thick as soup out there. They can't take much more."

"Let their nurses look after them!" Farlan declared stoutly. "Okay, Silver, this is the last baby. All set to go?"

"Right," Harriet said promptly. "I can take four at a time."

"Ohmigod!" Farlan muttered as a violent pounding sounded at the door. "Those babes are blocking the exit."

"Open! Open up!" the women howled. "Unlock this door!"

Through the glass, Harriet caught a brief glimpse of smoke-darkened faces twisted with emotion, hair unkempt,

mouths distorted, streaming eyes red and wild—the ragged remnants of the women who had won through against the nurses.

"Go back!" She strove to make herself heard. "Your babies are being moved!"

But turn back a typhoon . . .

STILL shrieking, the women began throwing their combined weight against the door. It held, though the glass pane shivered and the wood frame with it.

"Confound them!" Farlan swore, swiftly moving the babies closest to the door. "They're holding us up. We can go through the smoke, maybe, but we can't go through a fighting mob of lunatics with these infants."

"Wait a minute," Harriet muttered grimly. "They're raving crazy—because they're frantic for their children. But maybe we can use them. Maybe we can do it all in one trip. Let them help us, Farlan. If they see they're getting the kids out themselves, they'll be easy to manage. Two babies to each woman. Think it'll work?"

Farlan threw her an uncertain look. "Better than standing here waiting to choke to death."

Instantly, Harriet flung open the door. The disheveled band swarmed in, coughing, retching, but screaming their triumph.

"Ladies!" Harriet shouted down their clamor. "You want your babies out of here alive? Then do as we tell you—and *no back talk!*"

Something in the manner, something in the tone, brought the reeling women to a semblance of order. Eager to help, their hysteria quickly died. Like a small army marshaled for a last stand, Harriet and Farlan filled the women's arms with infants and wet towels to help withstand the smoke.

"So don't worry!" she heard Mrs. Kaminsky shouting down an excited neighbor. "Don't waste time looking for your own. Is *your* baby, is *my* baby, is not important! All the babies must come out!"

"We all ready now!" dusky Mrs. Jackson announced. "Who goin' to lead?"

"I will," Harriet said, gathering four

infants in her arms. "Remember, girls, use your wet towels on your faces if it gets too bad, and don't let the wet rags slip from the babies' faces."

With a last look at her little band, she led them out into the smoke-swirling hallway and turned sharply right. Behind them, the hoarse shouts of the firemen, the crash of their axes, penetrated the rolling mass of yellow smoke. Ahead, the outlook was scarcely better. The halls stretched in an endless haze, broken now and then by helmeted figures looming up an instant on their dash to the blaze.

"We're all right," Harriet assured them all. "Go on—there's others need you! We're managing."

On they trudged with burning eyes and gasping breaths, bending low, seeking the clearer air near the floor.

"Okay, Farlan?" Harriet yelled back when they had passed a bend in the hall and the smoke was noticeably thinner.

"Okay—fine!" came the response.

"All right. Ladies?"

"All right — keep goin' — we doin' okay, Miz Silver!" Voices were strained, choking, but brimful of courage.

Harriet glanced back with pride. And in that moment, her eye fixed on young Mrs. McGrath who had left her place and stood waiting for the other women to file past.

"Back in line, there," she cautioned. "You'll be wandering off in this smoke."

But Mrs. McGrath didn't seem to hear. She stood where she was, swaying slightly, peering into the arms of each woman who passed her.

"Back in line, I say," Harriet ordered sternly.

Mrs. McGrath's red head shook slowly, dazedly. Suddenly, as the last woman moved past her and Farlan brought up the rear, she whirled again to the head of the line. Coughing, reeling, her face paste-white, she came abreast of Harriet. Her lips taut as wire, her eyes burning holes staring into the nurse's questioning face, Mrs. McGrath snapped two words:

"Where's mine?"

Harriet's face went blank.

"Where's mine?" the woman repeated, stepping squarely in Harriet's path, the two infants she held forgotten, but

clutched to her breast in a frenzy of apprehension.

"Back in line now, Mrs. McGrath. One of the women has yours. We can't stop to find out who now. Don't worry."

"Where's mine, I say?" relentlessly. "I don't see mine. Mine has red hair and none of the babies in this line has red hair. I had a feeling—something told me—I had to see for myself. . . And my baby isn't here!"

HARRIET'S heart froze. For a second, the floor seemed to rock beneath her. If this woman was right—

"Let's check!" she said and, whirling shouted: "Who's carrying a red-haired baby?"

Hastily the women checked, there in the smoke-dimmed passage. They checked the hair and the tiny beaded wristlets bearing the babies' names. Not a McGrath showed.

From the corner of her eye, Harriet saw the change come over the young mother's face as hope fled. In a moment, she would charge back into the dense clouds behind them. Harriet acted.

"Here, take these," she ordered the women behind her, and thrust upon them the four infants she carried. To Farlan she called, "Keep 'em moving, and hold on to *her*!" with a toss of her head toward Mrs. McGrath.

Before anyone could protest, she was gone, plunging into the rolling smoke until she vanished from their sight.

It was like swimming upstream against a strong current. Each breath, even through the wet towel, was a straining torture.

"That baby can't live in this!" she thought, as her feet pounded recklessly onward. "It's much worse than before."

The trip back was an eternity. The halls an endless labyrinth. Somewhere at the end was a single breath of fresh air. Her lungs ached for it. Her flaming eyes were hot coals in her head.

Gasping and retching, she passed the lab door, the pharmacy door, barely visible through the piling smoke clouds. Passed the labor room, the delivery room, through an arch, and at last—at last—the nursery.

Through the open door she flung her-

self, reaching for the flashlight in her pocket. The beam of light made weird circles on the writhing smoke walls. Leaping for the babies' baskets, Harriet flashed it into each in turn. Empty. Empty. Empty. Straight down the line.

"Not here, not here, not here!"

She grew apprehensive. Had a fireman heard its cry and picked it up? She couldn't be sure. She couldn't leave the nursery until she knew.

Then she saw the small huddle of baskets on the floor, remembered Farlan hastily removing two or three from the table near the door for fear the crazed mothers would storm in and upset them. The beam of light sped from one to the other.

The McGrath baby occupied the second! Stumbling toward it, with a surge of relief, Harriet peered uncertainly into the tiny face. It slept.

"Lucky you," she mumbled. "You couldn't have lived if you hadn't been down on the floor in this clear current of air."

Kneeling and choking, Harriet ripped her wet towel in two, placed a small square of dampness over the baby's face. She hugged the tiny form to her and rose to a crouching position.

Reeling, lurching, she staggered across the nursery bending as low as she could with the child in her arms. Again toward the smoke-saturated halls that wound tortuously to the fire exit. Floundering, she sped down the passage, ever conscious of the flickering little life in her arms.

Her breath came in huge, painful gasps. Her lungs seemed bursting with agony. Her temples throbbed and a roaring noise possessed her brain. But her beam of light held steady, though her steps faltered and she leaned heavily once or twice against the wall.

How long, she could not tell. Time lost all meaning. Nothing mattered except that her leaden feet continue to rise, to fall, to rise, to fall and not give way to the lightness in her head.

Once she fell to her knees, hugged the floor a moment, crawled a pace or two, but it was too slow with only one free hand. She staggered to her feet again and, crouching, reeled onward.

And suddenly, a face loomed out of

the haze—and reality left off. From this point onward, everything was colored with fantasy.

It was Sam Hellman's voice she heard hovering above her in an excess of relief.

"Harriet! Thank God! Thought I'd never find you."

She swayed, and a strong arm slipped instantly about her, supporting her, so that she knew this was no image beside her.

"You all right?" he blurted, half lifting her, as he led her down the hall.

"Fine," she panted, though the loud-ening roar in her head blotted up all other sounds. Even his deep voice came thinly from a great distance.

STILL racing, he bent over once to study her face anxiously.

"Really—I'm f-fine—" she managed, and together they hastened around the last bend in the hall.

Here the air was cooler, the smoke pall lighter. The exit to the fire-escapes was at last only yards away. Once there, Harriet knew, she would be all right. The roaring would stop. The headiness would vanish. Her feet would feel the solid foundation beneath them.

Yet when Hellman lifted her the last few steps and thrust her out upon the metal platform, with a last gasp bursting from her, the roaring did not stop, and the headiness did not vanish. Rocking and weaving where she stood, she whipped the damp cloth from the McGrath baby's face and saw with infinite relief that it slept.

Sam was staring down at her as intently as she stared at the infant.

"Rest here," he said briefly, "till you can take those stairs."

"In a minute," she breathed. Then, seeking to drag her mind from the faintness that stole through her, she panted: "How—did you—get in on—this?"

"I was hardly out of the door when it broke loose," he returned, and something vaguely painful recurred to her.

In a flash it came back with searing vividness. When Sam had left her, it was to be forever. He had come to say good-by, and he had said it, without rancor, but without love. His tone, she remembered, had been as dead as his feeling for her.

And yet, in that smoke-filled maze, perhaps for all he knew into the abode of death, he had come seeking her. She remembered his face, in that first joyous instant of finding her, the intense relief of his voice. Did it all mean nothing? Shaking her head to clear the persistent fog from her brain, Harriet shot a glance upward into his dark eyes. Sam Hellman turned away, confusedly.

He leaned over the iron railing peering down to the lighted court. Now, of a sudden, Harriet caught faint sounds of activity rising from below.

"They're dangerously short-handed down there," Sam said with ill-concealed impatience. "Hardly more than five doctors on hand. The panic was frightful, unbelievable! Especially after the blaze got to the elevator shaft."

"Many patients hurt?" she asked.

"Some—but everyone's suffering shock, hysteria. They've come streaming into the west wing by the hundreds. Some walked. Some crawled. Some were carried. All of 'em babbling like crazy. They've used every available cot, and it's not enough! They've got 'em on blankets on the floor. They've got every able person on duty—even some volunteers off the street. And it's not enough!"

He paused again, leaning far over the rail.

"I think, if you can make it now, we'd better go down. They need everyone. I shouldn't have left—only Farlan bringing that news about you, I couldn't—"

He broke off sharply, avoiding her eyes.

CHAPTER V

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS



time it left.

And the heaviness on her chest—the

A MOMENT later they were pressing down the metal steps as rapidly as Harriet could travel. She was aware of a distinct irritation now with the buzzing roar that still dominated her brain. Surely it was

baby she carried didn't weigh all of that. Sam had wanted to take it from her, but she clung to it with senseless tenacity. So he held on to her instead all the way down, which was as well because the lightness of her feet matched the lightness of her brain, and she had the curious sensation of floating through space.

"I'm really fine now," she told him again as they approached the west-wing door, for she sensed his growing eagerness to be back with the patients now that she no longer needed him.

"Sure of that?" he asked, fixing a professionally penetrating stare on her, as they stepped through the open door into the chaotic activity of the emergency set-up.

SHE was nodding her reply when a sharp call brought her head up with a start.

It was not so much that she recognized the strained voice of Neal Darnley, not so much that the sight of him, bare-armed and sweating, was oddly warming at this time; it was the words he spoke that parted her lips and widened her eyes.

"Hellman! Sam Hellman! You still here? Where are you now?"

"Here, sir," she heard Sam call back, raising an arm to identify himself.

"Good! I want you—" Neal's voice trailed off as Sam went at a trot to join him.

Swaying with the sudden overwhelming fatigue that flowed through her limbs, Harriet leaned against the door frame, staring at the incredible scene before her.

There amid the shocking confusion, there above the passionate sounds of hysteria, two figures alone stood out clear and sharp to her vision, as though they moved in a shimmering aura. She stood, then, with the McGrath baby forgotten in her arms, and listened, and stared in wonder.

Together Hellman and Darnley consulted. Together they administered a hypodermic to a patient, moved down the line, and together paused for a swift examination of a new arrival. Together they prepared an oxygen tank, watching intently for the immediate results.

Harriet's gaze followed them from patient to patient. Suddenly Sam, shirt sleeves rolled, sweat standing on his brow, face tautly drawn but wondrously compassionate, knelt beside a sobbing child. Before the youngster knew what had happened, he had been given a quick injection to calm him, Sam murmuring the while:

"That'll help, son. Just lie back now, and relax, like a big, brave man."

"You'll come back, Doctor?" the child pleaded anxiously.

"Just every time you call me, I'll be back, son." The boy lay back and his sobs were stilled.

And Neal Darnley stared down, and his lips compressed, and his eyes for a fleeting instant were far away.

Suddenly, Harriet's throat was full and the joy in her heart seemed boundless. She pressed her hard little fist to her mouth, and back of it, rejoiced:

"They've forgotten—they've forgotten to be 'different'!"

It came to her then, through the everlasting haze of her brain, that in the brief passage of time since Sam had told her he was leaving, something had happened—something deep within him. How else explain the gentleness, the peace of his expression, the total absence of the bitter lines that had begun to pull at his mouth?

In the instant of this realization, his eyes lifted, and locked with hers a moment. He smiled, and she knew what had come to pass. In this mad hour of hysteria, Sam Hellman had found himself—wandering among the prostrate and the helpless.

Suddenly Harriet was listening to another sound, a persistent sobbing that she realized all at once had been going on for some time. It rose and it fell, and it rose again, almost to a scream.

If her brain would only clear, she thought, she could look into it. But her mind remained fogged and dull, the noise in her head as loud as ever.

She surged erect, only to fall back against the door frame again and listen a moment longer to the monotonous sobbing. It was coming from the far corner of the lobby, she determined at last. Curiosity sent her rocking and weaving, threading her way among the number-

less cots, the blankets, the excited groups of people, the babbling patients, the scurrying nurses.

ONCE the baby in her arms coughed, and Harriet looked down at it in a detached sort of way. She couldn't seem to recall—

She stopped short behind a thick pillar, staring at a strange scene ahead. At the center of a small knot of people, stout Mrs. Kaminsky sat upon a cot, her ample arms enfolding the slender form of Mrs. McGrath. Upon her wide, heaving bosom, the distracted mother's head formed a wavy red sunburst. Together the women rocked back and forth, back and forth, grief unrestrained, sobs blending, tears intermingling.

Kneeling beside them, weeping softly, Mrs. Reilly counted her rosary, Mrs. Bauer prayed into her hands. Wet-cheeked Mrs. Jensen reached a trembling hand to pat the red hair, murmuring, "The firemen are lookin' now, honey. Take heart, take heart." And Mrs. Puciarelli clasped her hands to her mouth and swayed gently, her tears freely rolling.

Then clear above the heart-wracking sounds, Mrs. Jackson's broken voice rose in plaint:

"Why you take de baby, Lawd? Why you give 'er to Miz McGrath and take 'er back again?"

Mrs. Kaminsky, hearing, sobbed the louder and clutched the young woman closer. In a circle all about, the women mourned with her.

And all at once, it came to Harriet that the object of their intense grief lay this moment quietly asleep in her arms. She lifted the baby higher, took a step forward, holding it out to its mother.

It was Mrs. Kaminsky who first saw the child.

"Look!" she shrieked. "Darling—give a look who's here!"

Abruptly the red head flew up. The young woman's voice rose in a shrill scream of joy. She snatched the child from Harriet's arms and hugged it frantically.

Spellbound, Harriet stood swaying slightly, holding to a chair for support, dimly aware that Neal Darnley had

come up behind and slipped an arm around her. He stared down, his face filled with concern.

"I just heard," he murmured.

But Harriet did not hear. A wan smile played on her lips. There was something of glowing inspiration in the way the whole wonderful lot of those women grabbed and hugged the hysterically happy mother. Unstintingly they had shared her grief. Now, unstintingly, they shared her joy.

Suddenly Harriet was sobbing aloud, her palm pressed to her lips. Through her reddened, burning eyes, through the mist of hot tears, she saw Neal Darnley gazing down at her, an odd light flaring in his pale eyes. She lifted a limp hand, gesturing toward the joyous little group.

"That's what I mean, Neal!" she cried. "Do you see it, now?"

Then she pitched forward and would have fallen, except that he caught her in his arms, and held her—until Sam Hellman came bounding to his side. . . .

Harriet Silver wished the voices would go away. They had been hovering over her forever, it seemed. They kept floating in at her, now from the right, now from the left, for she didn't know how long. It wasn't that they were unpleasant voices. But they kept saying the silliest things.

She tried to open her lids, but they felt heavy and swollen and hot. She recalled with an inward shudder that there had been a frightful ordeal, but she thrust it from her and listened a while longer to those foolish remarks.

She wondered where she was. Then she didn't care too much, because she was so luxuriously comfortable. A welcome peace pervaded her brain, and for a time she lay casting about for a reason. Something had happened to bring that warm glow racing through her veins.

Then she remembered. She thought of Sam Hellman's face, and the gentleness that possessed it at last, and she sighed deeply. Even if he went away now, he went with Peace!

Abruptly the voices broke off. She felt a warm breath just above her lips. But it hurt too much to open her eyes. She breathed deeply, and slept again.

Eventually, the voices resumed. A low drone, scarcely above a whisper. Just enough to bring Harriet out of her deep slumber. This time she mustered her courage and fluttered her lids open the merest trifle.

INSTANTLY she recognized Neal Darnley's office. She lay, apparently, on a cot set up hurriedly in the center. Off to one side, her swift glance took in an oxygen tank. She shuddered. So the smoke had got her after all!

Well, no more of that. She was fine now. In a moment, she would rise up. Just as soon as her brain cleared and she stopped hearing those absurd things they were saying, Neal on one side of her and Sam on the other.

At this moment, Sam was speaking with slow emphasis:

"That wasn't the way I had it figured, sir. I felt that I had failed and would only be a handicap to her."

"Then you had it figured wrong," Neal returned. "If, as you say, you're checking out of town because you think she wants me, you're making a bad mistake. Yes, I've done everything I know to win her from you, Hellman, but . . . Oh, well, I never was much of a hand with the girls."

"You mean she—you *know* she still wants me, she loves me?" Sam asked guardedly.

"She told me," Neal said. "Is that good enough?"

Silence, while Harriet's heart pounded so violently she nearly had a relapse.

Then Neal spoke again, sternly this time. "I wouldn't put the wedding off too long, Hellman. That's a bad habit of yours, I suspect."

"How's that, sir?" Sam asked.

"Judging from the way you've put off signing your contract with this hospital, and turning it in. You've only a few more days, you know."

Again, silence. Then, Sam speaking: "Look, sir, there's some mistake. I

never got an acceptance from you. You never agreed to take me on as an intern."

"What's that?" Darnley exploded sibilantly. "Why, has that fool secretary of mine gone and slipped up again? Your telegram should have gone out with the rest, Hellman! I can't understand it."

He broke off suddenly and glanced down at Harriet. Her small hand, creeping along the blanket, found his and squeezed it hard. Her lids still closed, she mumbled something so low that he bent over to hear.

Her slowly opening eyes encountered his in a look of perfect understanding.

"Liar," she whispered affectionately. "You wonderful, sentimental old liar!"

And oddly, Darnley had to swallow twice before he could exclaim:

"Our kid's back with us, Sam. It's high time, too. I'm about ready for bed myself. You take over, Doctor!"

He rose wearily, stroked her forehead gently a moment. "You were pretty wonderful yourself, Harriet," he said, smiling down into her glowing eyes. Then he reached for his hat, bade them goodnight, and moved slowly to the door.

HARRIET turned her head to meet Sam Hellman's tender smile.

"H'lo, mouse," he said, the way he had always said it before his world collapsed.

Harriet laughed softly. "Doctor Hellman," she murmured lovingly, "what would you prescribe for a lady with a palpitating heart?"

Hellman chuckled. "This!" he said, "as often as permissible!" He bent over swiftly to administer a treatment.

But their lips had scarcely met when from the doorway, Darnley called piously: "Just keep that sort of thing up, and eventually you'll be hunting names—and I get to thinking, Neal Hellman wouldn't be a bad label to paste on a baby!"

Two Enthralling Novelets—NEXT FLIGHT TO ROMANCE by Ann Arden and LOVE IN THE NEWS by Jeanne Leggitt—in the January Issue of Our Companion Magazine, THRILLING LOVE! Now on Sale, Only 15c at All Stands!

By DOROTHY
DANIELS



No

Room for

DOUBT

THERE was an air of tense expectancy on the main floor of Carter's Department Store. It wasn't apparent to the customers, who were rapidly thinning out after having taken advantage of the one night a week the store was opened. But to the girls who

worked behind the counter, it was an evening charged with suspense.

From time to time their glances covered one of the large counters lining the aisles. Behind it were two girls. The eyes of the salesgirls held a trace of pity for one, and undisguised con-

How could Linda compete with a girl like Elise?

tempt for the other.

The pity was for Linda Lavery—Linda, who had told them that Ned Armstrong, a young man she had met several months ago and whom she was going to marry shortly, was coming in tonight before closing time. Linda had wanted the girls to see him.

Only how did Linda expect he would still be her boy friend once Elise Fuller had spotted him. How could Linda hope to compete with that baby face and curly blond hair and a figure which tight fitting dresses showed to full advantage.

True, Linda was nice to look at. Not beautiful, but with soft brown hair and an oval face that was rather plain, except for her eyes which were a lovely shade of blue.

Also, Linda had had other men stop in to see her and they ended up dating Elise.

Linda had told the girls that this was different. The others hadn't mattered. Ned did, and she was sure of him, certain he couldn't be snared by a face that pouted into his and a lace hankie, heavily perfumed, that would be wafted in a casual manner before him.

The other girls had stopped having their boy friends drop into the store to say a few words. Elise had a most enterprising way of having some business at whatever counter the visitor appeared. So, according to the girls, Linda had done a stupid thing. Linda had just smiled wisely and remained quiet.

Now, though, she fingered the white collar which she had placed on her sweater that morning. Somehow, she had starched it too heavily and it wrinkled all around the neck line. She had tried unsuccessfully all day to straighten it.

And Elise, who had evidently heard the girls talking about Ned coming, had rushed home at noon and changed to a sleek, shining black satin. Not appropriate for work, Linda knew, but somehow Elise was the type who could get away with it.

Mr. Parker, the floor walker, liked her. And Elise used the perfumed handkerchief ingeniously when he was around.

LINDA had been certain she had no cause for worry. But the satin dress had given her her first doubts, and Elise's wise smile as she scanned Linda's simple skirt and sweater costume, did nothing to increase her confidence.

But Linda's head raised defiantly. It wasn't fair to doubt Ned. She loved him and he loved her, and all the Elises in the world weren't going to keep them apart.

Her eyes softened as she thought of him, of his serious gray eyes and craggy features which were deeply tanned from his outdoor work. Ned was a carpenter, a good one, too. He had completed several pieces of furniture which were going into their apartment.

"Daydreaming—on the job?" a voice drawled teasingly.

Linda blinked. Then smiled. It was Ned.

"I was day dreaming, Ned," she said. "Of you."

"Thanks, Linda." Then, coloring a bit, "You know, I stood outside the store for about ten minutes working up courage to come in here."

She chuckled. "I'm glad you came. I wanted the girls to see you. They'd have thought I was just pretending I had a boy friend."

"I'm real enough," he assured her. "And a little impatient for closing time. Mother's prepared supper for us and I've made a bookcase. I want your approval."

"You have it even before I see it," Linda told him staunchly. "But now that you've told me, I'm a little impatient myself—" She paused as the fragrance of a too sweet perfume assailed her nostrils. She felt Elise's arm around her shoulder. She wanted to shrug it off, but swallowed the impulse.

"Honey, aren't you going to introduce me?" Elise said.

"Of course," Linda said.

Ned acknowledged the introduction and there was a moment of silence. But only a moment. Then Elise's eyes widened wistfully.

"Linda does nothing but rave about how wonderful you are," she said. "She's right, too. Such broad shoulders.

So nice for a little head to rest on."

Linda sighed. She hadn't mentioned Ned's shoulders to anyone. Nor had she bragged about him. She was just happy to know he was going to be hers.

Ned seemed uncomfortable. He looked to Linda for help.

"Elise is exaggerating a little," Linda said. "Not about your shoulders, but I haven't talked about you, Ned." There, that ought to fix her.

Elise laughed. "Don't believe her, Ned. Besides you're the kind of a man a girl just has to brag about."

The handkerchief fluttered. Linda winced.

"Honey, there's a customer at your end of the counter," Elise said.

"You take her, will you, Elise?" Linda said.

"Honey, I'd be glad to," Elise said, deadly serious, "but Mr. Parker, the floor walker, is watching. He'd be pretty sore if I went down there. We're not very busy now, you know."

Linda knew it was useless to argue. Besides, there was truth in what Elise said. She nodded reassuringly to Ned.

"I'll be right back. Don't go away."

His, "I won't," helped to ease her fears.

The customer wanted some blue ribbon to match a piece of fabric. There was none showing, but Linda knew there was a fresh shipment of ribbons in the stock room. She was to put them on display the following day. She told the woman she would go downstairs to see if they had the shade. Linda glanced back at Ned. He was smiling amusedly at something Elise had said. Her face was close to his. Linda, desperate with fear, rushed to the stock room. It took fifteen harried minutes before she found the right color.

Then she raced back to the counter. There she paused. Her eyes panicked and flicked to Elise who gave her a smug smile and turned her back.

Linda completed the transaction and walked up to Elise. "Where's Ned?" she asked harshly.

Elise shrugged. "Gone."

Linda's hands clenched tightly. She wanted to slap that pretty face. "What happened?" she said.

Elise opened her purse and dabbed

perfume behind her ears.

"What do you think?"

"You're contemptible. After every man you see, and not giving a hoot for any of them."

Linda's voice was tense, but she kept it low. She knew now the girls were right. She didn't have a chance against Elise. Ned wasn't strong enough to resist her. Probably no man was.

ELISE laughed, thoroughly enjoying Linda's heartache and anger.

"You were pretty sure of yourself, weren't you?" she said.

"I was pretty sure of Ned," Linda retorted. "I thought he'd see through you."

"You were wrong, honey," Elise replied slowly.

"Stop calling me 'honey'," Linda fumed.

She was straightening her counter now, trying to gain self-control, hoping the girls didn't realize just what had happened. But she knew they had, and that they were pitying her. They had warned her, but she had been so sure. Linda held back the bitter sobs that wracked her throat.

Elise moved to her end of the counter.

"You should know better than try to compete with me," she taunted, over her shoulder. "You neither look nor dress the part."

Linda ignored her. The closing bell rang and she raced to the locker room. She couldn't bear words or glances of sympathy. She donned her coat and hat, ran to an exit which employees could use but seldom did, and went out onto the street.

There was a short cut through an alley that cut off the block where she knew Ned's car would be parked. At least, she wouldn't have to suffer the humiliation of passing him while he waited for Elise to dab on more make-up and perfume.

She turned up the collar of her polo coat and thrust her chin deep inside it. She didn't want to see or talk to anyone. It was useless to console herself with the thought that it was best for her to know that Ned could fall for a pretty face. She loved him anyway. And she always would. Perhaps, when

Elise jilted him for someone else, he would come back to her.

Linda hated herself for thinking of him like this. He had been everything fine and decent to her. She wondered how she could have been so wrong about him.

A hand caught her arm and gripped it firmly. Linda without looking, tried unsuccessfully to shake it off.

"Please, you're hurting me," she said, then turned and looked up into Ned's face.

It was grim and in his eyes was a puzzled look.

"Sorry, Linda," he said. "I didn't mean to. But I feel a little hurt myself. I had a heck of a time finding you."

"You mean"—a sob almost choked off the words—"you're ashamed. Well, it's all right. Go back to Elise. You can have her."

"Thanks," was the curt reply. "But I was under the impression I'd chosen my girl."

"So was I!" Tears gleamed brightly.

"Come in here." He practically lifted her into a darkened doorway and turned so that his shoulders blocked the view of passersby. "Now, suppose we have an understanding."

"About what?" Linda looked sideways.

"You and me. What's got into you?"

"Ned Armstrong, you're talking crazy." Linda's hands raised and brushed his hands from her shoulders. "You came into the store to see me."

"And I wish I hadn't," he interrupted.

"So do I!" she flared. "But you did. And you slipped off when I disappeared, because you'd made a date with Elise. And you ask me what's happened?"

He regarded her ruefully, then slowly smiled.

"Is that what she told you?"

Linda thought a moment. "No. But

from her manner I assumed it."

"You assumed too much," Ned said. "It's true she did give me the soft glance and make the sweet talk and flutter a silly handkerchief loaded down with perfume that made me want to sneeze. But I didn't date her. I guess I told her a few things—including among which was that you were worth a million of her."

"Y-you did?" Linda said startled. Slowly her head moved until she was looking into his face.

"Yes. She didn't like it."

LINDA was beginning to feel pleased. "So she called the floorwalker and told him I was trying to flirt with her," Ned went on. "I was escorted to the door."

"Oh!" Linda looked alarmed. "I'll probably be fired."

"No." Ned's head moved negatively. "I told him the truth as we walked away. He didn't like it. I guess he has a yen for Elise himself. Anyway, I'm thinking the handkerchief isn't going to do her much good with the floorwalker from now on."

"Ned, I—I've been an awful fool. It was hard for me to think you'd fall for Elise. I was certain you loved me."

"I do," he assured her. "But I want to know whether you'll ever doubt me again."

"Never," Linda said fervently.

She moved closer and her hands slipped up and went around his neck.

"And you're still my girl?" He smiled forgiveness and drew her close.

"For always, Ned, if you want it that way." She was standing on tiptoe now.

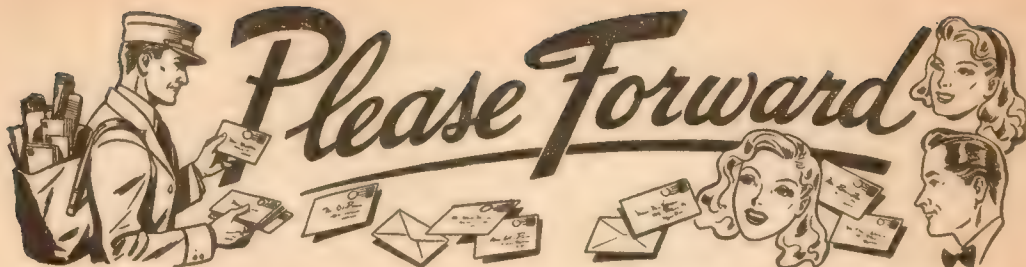
"I want—for always. And if you doubt it, here's further proof." There was no room for doubt in the embrace that followed.



MY LOVE COMES MASKED, an Enchanting Complete Novel by Carol Boyd,

Featured in the December Issue of Our Companion Magazine

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A Correspondence Department conducted by MRS. FAITH SIMPSON

WE have inaugurated this new department for the benefit of thousands of readers who wish to make new friends, many of whom have written us asking for our help. If you are interested in having pen pals, please write to Mrs. Faith Simpson, care of EXCITING LOVE, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. Introduce yourself by writing an interesting letter that will make others eager to know more about you. Be sure to sign your full name and state your address, age and sex. Please provide at least one reference. We will use only your first name or a nickname when your letter is printed. We will forward all mail received for you.

Women and girls may write only to women and girls, and men only to men. No letter will be forwarded unless a stamped envelope is enclosed. Do not seal any letter which you wish to have forwarded. Mail us your request for letters NOW, for early insertion in this department. Mrs. Simpson will be more than happy to hear from you!

OUTDOOR LIFE

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a bachelor of 38, interested in body-building and wrestling, outdoor life and recreation. I would like to hear from other fellows whose interests coincide with mine.

DON No. 230

FOND OF FRIENDS

Dear Mrs. Simpson: Here's a young girl whose hobbies are going to shows and parties. Would like to hear from girls who are interested in having lots of friends. Please, won't someone write?

HELEN No. 231

WISCONSIN GIRL

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a Wisconsin girl of 16, and would love to have lots of pen pals, as I enjoy writing. Love all sports, most of all swimming and skating. For a hobby I collect snapshots and view cards. So all you view card and snapshot collectors, please write to me!

SHIRLEY No. 232

HOBBY IS QUILTING

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a married woman of 36 with 3 children. My hobbies are quilting, sewing, hunting, and fishing. I would like to hear from everyone, especially women with small children. Will answer all letters.

ALMA No. 233

LIKES TO WRITE LETTERS

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a married woman of 23 with two daughters. My hobbies are collecting flower seeds, letter writing, collecting small things, photography, and embroidery. I have lots of spare time for writing letters.

IRENE No. 234

DANCING IS TOPS

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a young girl who likes outdoor life. Dancing and swimming also rate tops with me. I would like to hear from anyone who is willing to write to me.

JEAN No. 235

YOUNG GRADUATE

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am an 18 year old girl who has just graduated from high school in May. I enjoy doing most anything from dancing to reading books. I have traveled very little and I would love to hear from girls from all over the country.

BETTY No. 236

MOTHER OF FIVE

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a married woman of 37, with 5 children. My hobbies are collecting novelty salt and pepper shaker sets, and I also like letter writing. Will discuss hobbies with anyone who wishes. So come on hobby pals, from all over, let's write each other real soon!

MILDRED No. 327

LONELY YOUNG GIRL

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a lonely young girl whose hobbies are swimming, dancing, skating, and taking pictures. Will exchange snapshots, and promise to answer all who write.

EBBY No. 238

POST-WAR GLOOM

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a young English fellow. I am very lonely and wish to make pen pals from all over as I am stricken with post-war gloom. I would appreciate hearing from anyone as I am very lonely.

ERIC No. 239

WILL EXCHANGE PHOTOS

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a young girl who is very anxious for more pen pals. My hobbies are dancing, popular music, and roller skating. Will exchange photos with anyone interested in writing to me. Please drop me a line soon.

SHIRLIE No. 240

ANXIOUS FOR PALS

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a married woman of 37 and I am very anxious to have a lot of pen pals from everywhere. I love to write and receive letters. I have no special hobby, except making sequin pins and earrings. Come on, friends, write to a lonesome woman.

JUNE No. 241

INTERESTED IN PHOTOS

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a young girl interested in exchanging photos and different types of books. I live in Georgia and would like to have letters from all over the states of the Union.

LENORA No. 242

EX-SERVICE MAN

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a 24-year-old single fellow. Love all sports, like to read, love both popular and classical music. Was in the AAF for 3 years. Would like to correspond with ex-service men, though all are welcome. Love to paint, draw and sketch. I am very anxious for pen pals. Someone, please write.

WALTER No. 243

SPORTS FAN

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a lonely fellow of 17, and I would like to have a pen pal. I like both outdoor and indoor sports. I love to receive and write letters.

DANNY No. 244

STUDYING MUSIC

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a young girl whose hobbies are dancing, movies, watching hockey games, collecting movie star pictures. I am just starting to study music. Will exchange snapshots.

GLENDIA No. 245

FARM GIRL

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a young girl who lives on a farm in Missouri. My hobby is collecting movie star pictures. I am very lonesome, and would appreciate hearing from girls from all over the world.

PATRICIA No. 246

TELEPHONE EMPLOYEE

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a young girl of 20 who loves all types of music, sports, and I also like photography. I am employed by the Telephone Company. I love to write letters, so here's hoping that someone will write to a lonely girl.

JILL No. 247

LONELY FOR PALS

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I'm a young married woman, 21 years of age, and live in the country. I get very lonesome and love to receive and write letters. My hobbies are embroidery work and exchanging photos. Please, gals around my age, write soon.

ALICE No. 248

NEW YORKER

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a sixteen year old boy and live in New York. As a pastime I like to go fishing and ride a bike. I would like to hear from boys especially in New York.

BARNET No. 249

S.O.S.

Dear Mrs. Simpson: Here's a call from a lonely married woman with three small children. My husband works at night so I have my evenings alone. So, everyone answer my S.O.S. and fill my mail box.

LUCILLE No. 250

SWEET SIXTEEN

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a sixteen year old girl who is interested in making new friends. I like popular music, movies and writing letters. I would like to hear from girls of any age, so please write.

BETTY No. 251

MALE NURSE

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a bachelor and very lonely for friendship. I am an Ex-G.I. from the Medical Corps and now am a Male Nurse. I have traveled abroad many times. Have various hobbies and pastimes.

JOSEPH No. 252

LONESOME LAD

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I live in a city and am from a large family. I get very lonesome at times and would like to hear from boys between the ages of seventeen and nineteen.

ENCARNACION No. 253

EX-NAVY MAN

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a bachelor thirty-five years of age and an ex-Navy man. My hobbies include gardening, traveling and collecting books. I would like many friends, as one cannot be without congenial people.

TED No. 254

SAILOR

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a sailor and very interested in receiving mail. I am a fellow of twenty-two years of age and like to swim, read, and travel to different parts of the world. I hope to hear from someone real soon.

JULIAN No. 255

CANADIAN TEEN-AGER

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a Canadian teen-ager and would like to hear from girls all over the world who are also sixteen. I love dancing and all sports.

BARBARA No. 256

LOVES HORSEBACK RIDING

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a fifteen year old girl who is very much interested in collecting movie star pictures and riding horseback. I will answer every letter I receive.

RUBY No. 257

MARRIED GIRL OF 22

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a girl of 22 and am interested in corresponding with girls in foreign countries. I have been married for two years and my hobbies are writing letters and telling of my experiences.

JEAN No. 258

EX-PROFESSIONAL SINGER

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a married woman, and an ex-professional singer looking for pen pals. I have traveled a lot and I love all active sports. I promise to answer all letters and would love to exchange snapshots.

CHARLOTTE No. 259

JEWELER

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a forty-eight year old man and a Jeweler. I like to write and receive letters. I would like letters from anyone, anywhere.

GREGORY No. 260

DRAWING HIS PASTIME

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a sixteen year old boy and going to high school. My favorite pastimes are working on airplanes and drawing. I would like to exchange drawings, so come on and get out your pencils and pens and let's see your speed.

JIMMY No. 261

GIRL FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a sixteen year old girl from the Philippines. I am crazy about sports, especially skating and bicycle riding. My ambition is to become a Nurse. I would like to hear from everyone, everywhere.

FELIZ No. 262

JUNIOR IN HIGH SCHOOL

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a sixteen year old girl and a Junior in high school. I like all kinds of sports and dancing. I would like to receive letters from all over the world and exchange post cards.

MIMI No. 263

COME ON AND WRITE

Dear Mrs. Simpson: I am a girl of eighteen and can tell anyone about the famous Hatfield and McCoy feud as they fought right where I live now. I wish to have pen pals, so come on and write.

JACQUELINE No. 264

GIRLS ARE LIKE THAT

By Ken Holloway



"You've lost your
power to hurt me,"
Herbert said

*Lovely Leslie
plays a prank
on her
own heart!*

LESLIE thought him the most insufferable man she had ever met. Not bad looking—if you cared for the rugged type—but such conceit! His manner implied that he thought any girl who casually glanced his way had

designs on him, and there was a "Hands off!" warning in the contemptuous flick of his eyes before they turned to matters more worthy of his exalted attention.

"All right, Mr. Uppity-up; you and me too," she mentally assured him. "Our relations are strictly business. Suits me fine!"

Herbert Upton was the new branch manager of the Fredonia Power and Light Company. Leslie Frome was the efficient senior stenographer. Even Mr. Upton grudgingly recognized her efficiency after the first day or so but his formal thanks, when she inevitably rose to the occasion, had about as much warmth as a cold storage locker.

What imp of the perverse caused her to act as she did the night he asked her to come back to help finish up some reports, heaven only knew—Leslie herself didn't.

For two hours they plodded away at figures—just the two of them alone in the office. Not a word that didn't have to be said. The only times Mr. Upton looked at her was when she was explaining some detail. He gave her his undivided attention then, just as he would have given it to a billing machine that he suspected might be out of order.

Leslie wasn't accustomed to being looked at as if she were a billing machine.

Mr. Upton's predecessor, an older man, had certainly been no wolf but after one of these evenings alone with her, he was likely to be in a bad way. His thoughts would stray, his face grow flushed. If her hand came ever so casually in touch with his, he would be completely flustered. Leslie felt sorry for him. He was a good man, loyally faithful to his wife and convinced that Leslie would be horrified if she knew the impulses her nearness engendered.

She wouldn't have been. Men, she discovered, couldn't help feeling that way in her presence. It wasn't their fault—it was just the way they were constituted, poor things. She almost envied them, wondering what it would be like to find a man who had the same effect upon her.

But this ice-hewn hunk of reserve—why she had no more impact upon him

than a piece of furniture!

"I believe that's all," Herbert Upton crisply concluded. He rose and put on his overcoat. It was early fall and the nights were chilly. He paused. "Call a taxicab for yourself and charge it to petty cash," he instructed. "Good night."

HER eyes flashed fire as he closed the door. Of all the goofs! So afraid of contamination that he wouldn't even offer to take a girl home in his car.

It was then that the perverse imp took possession of her.

She hastily typed a few lines, slipped the message into an envelope addressed "Personal," and left it on his desk.

He was warming up his motor before starting, almost in front of the entrance. She paused long enough to inform him, "The taxi line was busy; I can walk."

For a minute, she thought he was actually going to let her do it. But when she had proceeded some twenty feet down the sidewalk, his voice called after her.

"Miss Frome!"

She returned hesitantly as he stepped out of the car. "Get in," he said brusquely. "I'll run you home."

"You're much too kind!"

He ignored the sarcasm, or perhaps it escaped him.

"Which way do you live?" he demanded, settling himself at the wheel.

She waved her hand vaguely. "Out on Lansing Avenue. I'll let you know where to stop."

She relaxed with an ostentatious sigh of weariness. "That was a session," she commented. "I didn't realize how tired I am."

He drove in silence. After a minute or two she slumped against his shoulder. He glanced down, startled, at her relaxed features and closed eyes, barely discernible in the light from the dash; then, keeping his right hand on the wheel, he pushed her away with his left.

She murmured something incoherent, then slumped back.

This time she actually must have dozed off. When she came to herself, he was shaking her and speaking her name

in an impatient voice.

"Miss Frome!"

She sat up, bewildered. "I must have fallen asleep."

"We're at the city limits," he informed her gruffly. "I suppose we've passed your home."

Leslie peered into the night. "Passed it!" she retorted indignantly. "This is the wrong end of town. What made you come here?"

"You told me—"

"I meant North Lansing, of course. You turned south. See—there's the Casaloma Club just ahead—that building with all the lights." She regarded him suspiciously. "Oh! I'm beginning to get it now."

"To get what?" he asked tartly.

She laughed, a rippling laugh that she knew usually did things to a man's equilibrium. Not that it was likely to affect this goon."

"Aren't you clever!" she teased. "But why pretend? If you want to take me to the Casaloma for a few dances, I don't mind."

"I assure you, Miss Frome—"

She checked the utterance. "It's a perfectly respectable place. The best people go there. It's really lovely of you to surprise me this way." Leslie glanced up at his scowling features. Would the oaf still have the hardihood to back out? She laid it on a bit thicker.

"Johnny Singleton's band," she murmured dreamily. "Wait till you've danced to it—you'll agree that it's out of this world." She laid her hand on his wrist where it was exposed above his glove. A touch like that, she knew, could cause some men to forget all their inhibitions. Dangerous technique, but she was out for blood.

He snatched his hand away as if the contact burned him.

"I don't go to night clubs," he snapped.

She sat tense and mortified while he backed the car around and headed through town. Not only had her ruse failed, but she had laid herself wide open to the most crushing humiliation.

"Let me off at the bus station," she said icily. "I can get a taxi from there."

"I'll take you home," he said.

"I'd prefer that you didn't."

BUT he kept on through town, and presently they were on the tree-bordered avenue. Leslie's spirits dropped lower and lower. She had made herself contemptible in his eyes. The only way she could square matters was to make him realize that he was equally so in hers.

"I won my bet," she told him with a disdainful laugh. "Of course you didn't know about it, but I made a bet with myself back in the office. If I could get you to loosen up a bit—show that you had a little warm human blood in your veins, I'd lose. I was sure you hadn't."

"I see."

His voice was so unexpressive that it told her nothing of how he was taking this. Not that she cared.

"I pointed south so that you'd take that road, and I pretended to fall asleep," she informed him. "I didn't see how you could possibly turn me down when I pretended to think you wanted to go dancing. I don't believe a real human being would have been capable of it."

"So I'm not a human being?"

When she only laughed tauntingly in reply, he pursued the inquiry. "If I had—fallen for your little ruse, what then?"

"Oh, then!" She tilted her head and flashed him a careless smile. Her humiliation was gone. In some way, she felt that she had regained the upper hand. "Why, I'd probably have excused myself to visit the powder room. Then I'd have called a taxi and left you to wonder what became of the little girl who inveigled you into the place."

"And what would that have proved?"

"Nothing—perhaps—except to show what I think of you. Do you know the girls in the office call you Mr. Uppity-up behind your back?"

"This isn't going to improve our office relationship."

"That won't matter."

"Why not?"

"You'll find out," she assured him, "in the morning. And now let me out. I live in the last house in this block."

Instead of drawing up to the curb, he speeded up the car. Before she could quite grasp what he intended to do, they were racing out into the open country.

"Where are you taking me?"

He made no answer, but a short distance further on, he drew to a stop. Half a mile beyond was the dark outline of a farmhouse; the town lights lay behind them.

He swung toward her on the seat. "So you don't think I'm human!" Roughly, with an almost tigerish ferocity, he dragged her to him. Her head was forced back against the top of the seat and his lips clamped down on hers with bruising intensity. It actually hurt.

He was muttering something. Startled, frightened, pushing against him with all her strength, Leslie did not at first make out the words. Then she caught the phrases:

"Not human! That's what you think!"

His arms were strong — terribly strong. She was helpless in their grip, helpless to evade those seeking lips that moved from her mouth to her throat — to her mouth again.

It was frightening, disgusting, and — and something else. She managed to thrust one hand between her face and his, pushing him back.

He released her then, drawing over to his side of the seat, while she cowered away from him, panting and shaken, trying to frame the scathing words that would express her fury.

"You've been asking for it," he told her dispassionately. "All evening. Don't think I'm so dumb. I know what girls are."

"Oh, you do! Well, Mr. Conceit, here's one girl who happens to be different. One who wasn't impressed by your masculine appeal."

"Let me ask you this," he said slowly. "You won't give me an honest answer — you don't dare give it. Weren't you trying your best to make me kiss you? Isn't that what you had in mind when you employed that transparent trick to get in my car?"

She laughed scornfully. "Why you —" She stopped. The fool was playing right into her hands. "All right, I will give you an honest answer. That's exactly what I had in mind. But it wasn't for the reason you think. I didn't want

ur kiss; I merely wanted to see if you

had any human impulses."

"You've given me the answer," he said. "You merely wanted to assert your power. You like to feel that you can drive a man into a frenzy. Then you're, oh, so shocked if the poor dub loses control."

"Of all the disgusting things to say."

"It's your own statement in different words. You wanted to see if I had any human impulses."

SHE was silent, trying to figure an answer to that.

"I know quite well how the girls react behind my back," he told her. "Because I refuse to fall for their bait, it hurts their vanity. You're exceptionally full of it — this quality that sets a man crazy. The crude name for it is sex appeal. It annoys you to bursting when a man acts oblivious to it. You say he's cold — inhuman. Actually, you're the one who is cold. You —" He checked himself, then.

"That wasn't a very nice kiss," he said. "I enjoyed it, but it was a bit rough on you. See if you like this better."

He leaned over and tenderly — but very firmly — cradled her head against his shoulder. Then he bent and touched her lips as lightly and caressingly as if he were paying tribute to a rose petal.

Leslie held herself sullen and rigid. She wouldn't give him the satisfaction of struggling against him. Besides, he was so strong — he could impose his will if he chose. If he had any decency, he would stop when he realized that she was enduring this because she had to.

But it didn't seem to work that way. He was putting a lot of heart into it. And the kiss grew more demanding. It tingled down inside of her. He was awfully strong, and she could feel his heart beating against her, or was it his heart that beat so rapidly?

Surely not her own! She moved her arms, and somehow, without volition, they crept up along his shoulders, up, up — her palms were against his cheeks. She was holding his face against hers — holding it tight, as if fearful that he might draw away. She was returning the kiss — shamefully — thrillingly!

How could she? But again, how could

she help it? This was something new in Leslie's experience, something that caught her unprepared. With one part of her mind she was inwardly calling. "Stop it!" With another, she was frantically hoping it would never stop.

But it was the man who drew away, even pushed her back in the seat to give himself arm-room for starting the car. It was her lips that tried to cling, her hands that hated to relax their hold.

His voice came as if from a great distance, through the throbbing pulsation in her temples.

"I'm sorry," the voice was saying. "I didn't know—it would be like that."

They were driving back now, toward her home. Neither said a word. He walked to the door with her and waited while she fumbled for her key. Then, when she stood uncertainly, looking up at him, he kissed her very gently, very briefly, before turning away.

More than a night-long explanation, that kiss of mutual confession cleared away all confusion, wiped out the bitterness of things they had said to each other while they were groping toward each other's hearts through the mists of misunderstanding. . . .

THE next morning Leslie lay awake recalling, with a delicious languor, the experience of last night. Strange, how different it was to wake up to a glorious world in which you found yourself in love.

How differently she would see him this morning. Never again would she be deceived by his outward guise of iron reserve. It would be one of their secrets—this inner warmth of his which she alone knew existed.

Leslie suddenly flung the covers aside, springing out of bed, a lovely figure in her sheer nightgown. That note! The envelope she had left on his desk! How could she have forgotten?

Feverishly she dressed. Her mother called as she hurried down the stairs, fastening her coat as she headed for the front door. Leslie called back that she was late—could not wait for breakfast. She flung open the door just as a boy came up the steps.

"Miss Frome?" he asked. "Package for you."

She accepted it mechanically, plucked at the envelope tucked under the string. Even before she opened it, she knew. The typed lines swam before her eyes:

Dear Miss Frome:

I found your message. It so happens that I returned to the office after leaving you, to think things out. Perhaps I am less gullible than you think, for I wasn't greatly surprised. I happen to have been bitten before, so I know what girls are.

We are evidently agreed that it would be embarrassing if you returned to the office, so I am accepting your resignation and sending the effects I find in your desk by messenger. Your salary will be continued for the usual severance period.

Sincerely yours,

H. U.

Dragging herself up the stairs to her room, Leslie flung herself on the bed.

IT was partly to avoid the inquiring eyes and questions of friends and acquaintances that Leslie accepted an invitation to visit an aunt in St. Louis. She could afford to take a vacation before seeking another position. Returning, she yielded to an impulse which had been gathering in her mind and took a side trip to Elkton. It was the Elkton branch office that Herbert Upton managed before coming to Fredonia. She knew Doris Kingsley, the senior stenographer there, from their days in business school together.

Doris greeted her like a long-lost friend. They lunched together, and the talk drifted without Leslie's guidance to Herbert Upton.

"Tell me how he's making out," Doris urged. "I haven't seen him since—since it all happened—and I've been wondering. Some of the girls thought he never would snap out of it. These things leave permanent scars, you know."

Leslie choked on a food particle, hastily raising her napkin to her face. When she could speak, the husky tremor of her voice was logically accounted for.

"I'm afraid I don't know—what you're referring to."

"I thought the story might have reached you," Doris explained. "It isn't much to tell. One of the girls in the office—she isn't here any more—got into him pretty deep. She wasn't his kind at all but he went overboard so

hard that he would do anything she wanted. What she wanted was for someone to spend his money night after night taking her to night clubs. She was crazy about that kind of life.

"Then, when she stood him up, it knocked him for a goal. She did it in a peculiarly cruel and malicious way. They were to be married—and she ran off with a cheap fellow, just on the eve of the wedding. There wasn't the excuse of doing it on impulse. It was deliberately planned. Can you imagine any girl getting a cruel pleasure trying to make a fool out of a fine fellow like Herb?"

Leslie felt her cheeks burning. Doris went on:

"He tried to stick it out, but it was just too much for him. He went to pieces, had a spell in the hospital, and asked to be transferred. I suppose he's lost his faith in all women, just because of what one cheap little female did to satisfy her perverted vanity."

The words kept repeating themselves in Leslie's ears all the way home. "I know what girls are," he had said. And she, Leslie, had given him the final proof that he was right. That note she left on his desk turned the trick. How had she worded it? Something like this:

I'm resigning. Your attitude—too high and mighty for me. But just for the heck of it, I'm going to make you kiss me tonight. What will you bet I can't? Or are you too much of a stick? Either way, when you find this note in the morning, you'll know what the score is, Mr. Uppity-up!

How could she have been so cheap—so childish? Looking herself straight in the face, for perhaps the first time, she knew the answer. She had been unbearably piqued by his indifference. It must have meant a lot more to her, even at the time, than she realized.

With a deep sense of abasement, she realized that what she had mistaken for insufferable conceit was the resolve Herbert Upton had imposed upon himself never again to risk feeling that way toward a girl. He had been viciously hurt; it would never happen again—not if he could prevent it.

Leslie had had a chance to make him forget—a chance to prove to him that a girl could be sincere in love and loyal

to the man she cared for. She had muffed it hopelessly. From now on, he would be more than ever on the defensive.

She did muster courage to send him a note through the mail, a note which begged his forgiveness—asked him to believe she would have destroyed that message on his desk if it had been possible. He ignored the overture as she knew he would. Anything she tried now would be interpreted as an effort to break down his guard so that she would have him at her mercy again.

A few times, she met him on the street. He touched his hat formally and passed on with eyes as remote and cold—and as gray—as granite. She took to walking by herself a great deal, sometimes late at night, and when she had occasion to pass the Power and Light Company building, she occasionally saw a light and wondered if he was working there alone.

NOT until she had gone beyond the phase of self-pity and that feeling had been transmuted into a selfless desire to undo, for his sake, the damage for which she felt responsible, did she find strength, on one of those evenings, to try the door.

It was locked, of course. She stood there, attempting to muster the additional resolution to knock, when the door opened. Herbert Upton stood looking down, not recognizing her in the darkness.

"Yes?" he said inquiringly.

Her courage deserted her. She turned away, murmuring, "I made a mistake."

But he called after her, "It's you, Miss Frome, isn't it?"

She returned slowly. "I was afraid you'd turn me away if I asked to see you."

"I probably would," he conceded. "Since you didn't ask, come in." He led the way back to his office. She took a chair and he sat on the desk, looking down at her with cool speculation.

"After all," he explained, "there's no reason to avoid you. You've lost your power to hurt me. Knowing what you are—" He smiled slightly, leaving the sentence unfinished.

She was twisting and untwisting her

fingers. "That's what I came to see you about, Herbert." She hadn't meant to use his first name, the name by which she thought of him, but it slipped out. "Oh, I don't mean that I want to get back into your good graces," she added hastily. "I know it's too late for that."

He made no effort to assist her.

"But I thought this," she persisted, her fingers still nervously twisting. "Since you know I'm not—not trying to get anything for myself—you might believe what I tell you. Girls aren't all like me. Truly, Herbert, they aren't."

He nodded. "How interesting!" She knew he was mocking her.

"They aren't, really," she insisted. "It's just a few of us—the—well, I suppose you'd call us the flashy kind. We've been spoiled. We've discovered that there's something about us men fall for. It gives us a false perspective. When a man doesn't succumb right away, we take it as an affront—a challenge. We set out to punish him. Oh, I know it's cheap and unworthy!"

"I see your point," he assured her ironically. "The girl isn't to blame—it's just something wished onto her by nature. One ought to forgive her and give her a chance to pull the same stunt again."

"No, no!" she protested. "We are to blame. But that's not the point. The reason I came here—it's to make you realize that we're the exceptions. Most girls aren't like that. It's just the few of us—the cheap kind who have been spoiled."

"Then I take it the homely girls are all right. It's safe to trust them?"

"You're making it sound ridiculous! All I'm trying to say is that you can't judge by a few exceptions. I don't want you to go on living inside of yourself—in a shell. Some girl could love you—the way you deserve. Some girl that you need—and who needs you."

He studied her reflectively. "You wouldn't, by chance, have the particular girl in mind?"

She gave a hopeless gesture and rose to her feet. Sudden anger rose to the surface. "If you think I'm talking for myself, forget it. I wouldn't have you on a bet. I wouldn't have any man. They're either egotistical fools or em-

bittered misanthropes. I'm sorry I came."

She stumbled toward the door, stifling the sobs that threatened to betray her. Her one backward glance showed him sitting on the desk regarding her with a look that she could only interpret as sardonic.

Too listless to walk, she went home in a taxi. All she wanted was to reach her room and crawl miserably into bed.

It hadn't accomplished anything—her visit. He was too firmly encased in his shell. But at least she had tried. And he might, in spite of himself, think about what she had said. Perhaps he would remember it, if he should happen to meet the right girl, and then at least he would have his chance for happiness.

As she ascended her front steps, a figure emerged from the porch shadows to confront her. She was startled rather than frightened. Perhaps she was too spiritless to feel any emotion.

HE spoke her name and she recognized his voice. For an instant, it seemed uncanny that he could be here, when she had left him but a few moments before in his office.

"I drove out here after you left. Thought you might be walking and I'd pick you up along the way."

"I was tired," she returned listlessly. It was cold and dark on the porch, but she did not think to invite him in.

"I had to find out something," he went on, in the same impersonal voice. "Why did you come to see me?"

"I told you," she responded. "Don't look for ulterior meanings in what I said. There aren't any."

"But why? Why does it matter to you? Why take such an interest in my attitude?"

She sighed. This was all so futile.

"I'm responsible," she returned. "I had my chance to bring back your faith. Instead, I deliberately turned a knife in the wound. If I had known, as I've learned since that night, why you were so aloof—so distrustful—I don't think I'd have acted like a cheap little fool. But that's no excuse. And as long as I felt responsible—well, at least I could try to undo the harm."

(Continued on page 113)



"I think," Jane said, "there's a blonde in the next car"

I'd Climb the **HIGHEST MOUNTAIN**

by Dorothy Brodine

ALISON WARE sat in the air-cooled coach, holding in her lap her gray top coat and several large, smooth-covered magazines. "It seems funny," she said to Jane Pritchard, "to be going to Stowe in summer. I mean, whenever I think of Stowe, I think of ski wax and telemarks and hot buttered rums in front of a big log fire."

The coach, ultra modern with its

royal blue pile upholstery, its chromium and its plate glass, was due to leave Grand Central in ten minutes. So far, about one-third of the seats had been filled. There were the usual nice old ladies, harassed women with small children, and well-fed business men in seersucker suits and Panama hats. A porter came through, offering orange juice and coffee.

"I suppose," Alison said, "that Stowe

A schoolteacher gets a lesson in love!

will be pretty quiet now. In June, I imagine the whole place sort of curls up and goes to sleep."

"Which," Jane Pritchard stated, "will be a good thing. You need a rest, and so do I. This very minute I have a splitting headache."

"What do you think is the matter? You didn't skip breakfast, did you?"

"I had an adequate breakfast," Jane said. "Fruit juice, scrambled eggs, toast, coffee. It must be the exams."

"I forgot the exams as soon as I gave the marks to the dean."

"After you've been teaching a few years, you won't forget so readily. It gets a person down, realizing how stupid the average college girl is."

"Stupid, Jane? But—"

"One of my Nineteenth Century Literature students thinks Lord Byron was a famous golfer."

"Oh, dear!" said Alison, sympathetically.

Alison was twenty-three years old. She looked younger. Half the time, she was glad she looked younger, and the other half, she was rather sorry. At Cedar Grove College, giving her lectures on the Tudor poets, she was sorry. She had a number of students who looked older and therefore wiser than she. Going to parties, going away for the weekend, she was glad. According to popular fiction, the young women to whom *Things Happened* were never more than twenty-three. Often, they were less.

JANE PRITCHARD was more than twenty-three. She had been teaching English Literature at Cedar Grove for five years, and for the last year, Alison had been her assistant. Jane was clever, energetic and brittle. She wore gabardine and tweed superbly, and effected big hats, bags and jewelry. She was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, but looked it only when she put on her shell-rimmed glasses.

Alison knew she should not be in awe of Jane. Not when they were sitting side by side in this air-cooled coach, bound for Vermont, where they would spend the coming week together. But when she thought of the year just past, of the way she had worked under Jane's

constant, exacting supervision, she felt small and insecure. She felt more like Jane's pupil than her assistant. She didn't want to call her "Jane"; she wanted to call her "Miss Pritchard."

The second time the porter came through, Jane stopped him, and bought two containers of orange juice. Alison offered to pay for hers, but Jane laughed, and said not to be silly.

"Orange juice!" she scoffed. "I guess you deserve an orange juice, after the help you've given me at the college."

"I tried to help," Alison said. "But half the time, I felt more like a hindrance."

"A hindrance, indeed. If you knew how the average assistant turns out, you'd never say such a thing."

Alison tasted her orange juice. It was very cold, and had a faintly pungent aroma.

"Oh," she murmured, "is that so?"

"The girl I had before you—she was a character, if I ever saw one. I spent the whole year trying to make a teacher of her, and got nowhere. And why? Because the very sight of a man was enough to throw her off her trolley." Jane's stern expression softened. "Then, when you came along, I knew I had a prize. I have an idea my brother thinks you're a prize, too." Faintly, she smiled. "From the minute we hit Stowe, I expect you two to get on famously."

"You do?" said Alison, eagerly. "I mean, George is in Stowe to finish writing his book. He may not care to waste his time on me."

"Any time he spends with you won't be wasted."

Jane got out her shell-rimmed glasses, polished them with a piece of tissue, and put them on. She picked up her copy of "Progress," and opened it to an article which had to do with the harnessing of the nation's waterways. Now, she looked especially like a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

"My former assistant's name was Irma," she went on. "I shall never forget Irma. You know how your students write letters to their boy friends in class? Well, Irma used to write to her boy friends in class."

Alison spoke gravely. "I don't think I'd do that."

"Of course you wouldn't."

"I never heard of such a thing. Why, this Irma—"

That was when the young man in the yellow sport jacket and the bow tie came down the aisle.

He was an attractive, husky young man, such as one sees in posters advertising cruises to the Caribbean. He had sun-bronzed skin, crew-cut hair and blue eyes that twinkled with life and spirit. He was smiling good-humoredly. At first, Alison thought he was smiling at no one in particular. Suddenly, she realized he was smiling at her.

The seat in front of her was empty. He stopped at it, leaning upon it.

"If you girls would like a game of bridge," he said, "I can try to get a fourth."

Alison did not reply. She would have liked to, but because of Jane, she hesitated. With the glasses and the magazine, Jane looked every inch a schoolteacher. Alison, valuing her standing at Cedar Grove, had no desire to incur Jane's disapproval. She thought that in this case, Jane had better reply.

Promptly and coldly, Jane did. "No," she said, snapping shut her magazine. "We wouldn't like a game of bridge."

The young man shrugged, and grinned. "Come to think of it, I don't have a deck of cards. Not that that matters. The reason for all this, as if you didn't know, is that I'm lonesome."

Alison murmured appropriately. Jane simply glared.

"Would you mind," the young man ventured, "if I turned this seat around and talked to you?"

Jane glared harder. Her fingers tapped the cover of her magazine, impatiently.

"I think," she said, "that you'd better try the next car. I noticed a blonde back there."

The young man appealed to Alison. "What about you, pretty one? Do you think I should try the next car?"

ALISON liked the young man. She would not have confessed it to Jane, but she liked the way he was conducting this flirtation. He was easy and pleasant; he was absolutely sure of himself without being conceited. Gently,

she looked up at him.

"Well, I—"

"Yes, she does," Jane interrupted. "She thinks you should try the next car. Immediately."

The young man considered her command. He pulled down the cuffs of his jacket, and adjusted the wings of his bow tie.

"Thanks," he said, cheerfully. "I'll wander back and have a look."

With a heavy, clanking noise, the train got under way. Alison hung up her coat, and laid her magazines on the rack overhead. Jane took off her glasses, breathed upon them, and furiously repolished them. She muttered that these days the men were getting bolder and bolder. Even on a train, in the middle of the day, a girl was not safe from them. It was a crime, the way men tried to pick up girls. Even nice girls.

"But Jane, he didn't mean any harm," Alison said boldly. "He told us he just wanted someone to talk to."

"Then he should have picked a man. Almost any of the men in this coach would have been glad to talk to him. But did he pick a man? Not on your life. He picked us. Or maybe I should say, he picked you."

"But—"

"It's a crime, and if you think it over, you'll surely feel as I do."

The train rocketed through the tunnel, and burst into the sunlight. Apartments, little shops, coal and lumber yards, the shining Harlem River, streamed by. Beyond the river, the railroad tracks fanned out, forming a wide yard. Then there were factories, billboards, and presently, the greenness of a park.

Alison was absorbed by the window. Jane had settled with her magazine, and was marking significant passages with a red pencil.

After Manhattan and the Bronx, the train entered Westchester. Alison had glimpses of the churchyards of New Rochelle, of the drives and flowerbeds of Larchmont and Harrison. Then the smokestacks and rivers of Connecticut appeared, the backyards with young children playing in them, the streets and trees and rooftops.

By noon, they had traveled deep into the country. The hills were thick with evergreens, and wild flowers ran down to the tracks. It was when the porter came through to announce lunch, that Alison became aware of her tremendous appetite. She shook Jane's arm. "I could eat a house," she said. "How about you?"

Jane took off her glasses, and blinked her eyes. She had been reading about the smoking methods used by Gloucester fishermen. The caption said that

side the diner was a good-sized one. Alison attached herself to the end of it, behind a short, fleshy woman who wore a clutter of costume jewelry and a hat which trailed a long, curling ostrich feather. Every time the train lurched, the ostrich feather dipped, brushing Alison's face.

To safeguard her eyesight, Alison stepped from the line, and in so doing, saw the young man in the yellow sport jacket and the bow tie.

He had the first place in line. He was

Christmas List

*I've made my Christmas list today,
There's John and Ann and Sue—
There's Uncle Frank and dear old Hank,
But most of all, there's you!*

*I'll wrap my gifts in tinsel bright,
With ribbons gay and neat—
But one, apart, will bear my heart,
And that one's yours, my sweet!*

—HELEN ARDSLEY



Channel Islanders from Guernsey and Jersey had settled around Marblehead in the 1600's. With her red pencil, Jane had twice underlined this caption.

She raised her sleeve, and looked at her watch. "Noon already! We should have a bite, shouldn't we? But I hate the thought of getting in line for the diner."

"How's your headache? Still got it?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Then food will do you good. Let's go back, and take a look at the menu."

"But the line—"

"Well," said Alison, "I'll tell you what. As long as you have that headache, I'll wait in the line. I feel good today, and I won't mind. The minute a table is available, I'll call you."

As Jane had prophesied, the line out-

leaning against the closed door, his arms folded, his shoulders at ease. He was smiling, and for approximately one second Alison thought he was again smiling at her. The next second, she realized that he was quite unaware of her, and was giving his full attention to a blonde.

The blonde was tall and willowy and fashionably slender. She wore her hair brushed back from her face, and bound behind her ears by a huge, filigree pin. Her simple gray cotton dress, touched with white, was dramatic against the honey of her skin. Her black patent leather pumps and bag gave sophistication to what would otherwise have been a pastoral costume. The lipstick she wore was deep raspberry.

"Well, naturally," Alison thought. "He would hunt up a blonde. Jane was right. He is a wolf. If he weren't, he'd be back in the coach, discussing the Russian situation with some man."

Suddenly, the young man's eyes slid past the blonde, and tangled with Alison's. He grinned broadly, and lifted his hand in salute. Confused, Alison looked away. She didn't want him to think she had any interest in his acquaintance with the blonde. On the contrary, she hoped he realized that she considered him a wolf.

Just then, someone touched her arm from behind. "How's the line?" Jane's voice inquired. "Is it moving fast?"

"Oh, Jane," said Alison, whirling. "Your headache. You should be inside, sitting down."

"I got tired of sitting down. I was thinking too much of the way I felt, and—well! Isn't that our lonesome friend, up there with the blonde?"

"Yes," said Alison quietly, "it is."

"He doesn't seem lonesome now. Look, he's lighting her cigarette."

Alison looked. The blonde had bent to his light, and her eyes were conversing subtly with his. She placed her fingers over his wrist, drawing the light and his hand closer. She was playing the coquette as hard as she could, and apparently he didn't mind.

"An operator, if I ever saw one," Jane said disgustedly. "But I daresay Goldilocks can handle him."

"It's funny, Jane. When you mentioned a blonde in the next car, I thought you were kidding."

"I was."

"But she's a blonde; and she must have been in the next car."

"His kind will always find a blonde in the next car."

Finally, Jane and Alison had their turn in the diner. A courteous waiter showed them to a table for two, properly set with linen and china, near the back of the car. Alison would have approved of the table, except for the fact that the aggressive blonde and the young man in the yellow jacket were seated directly in front. With resolution, however, she sat down. She was adaptable. She would pretend not to notice them.

Jane picked up the table pad and pencil. "Now," she said, "let's see. Headache, or no, I'm going to eat. I'll have a crabmeat and avocado cocktail, breast of chicken Southern style, and asparagus Mornay. Also, tossed green salad with Lorenzo dressing."

"And I," said Alison, "want fruit salad, peanut and prune muffins, and for dessert, raisin lime cream and custard."

"And coffee?"

"Coffee."

Jane scribbled on the pad. "Incidentally," she said, "the doll baby blonde just said something about Hollywood's being dull. She must be a disappointed actress."

"She looks it. An actress, that is, not necessarily disappointed. What else is she saying?"

Jane listened. "She says she went to a party at Don the Beachcomber's, and Rex Harrison looks exactly like the King of England."

"But what is he saying? Isn't he doing any of the talking?"

Jane was carefully writing their orders. "No," she said, "so far, he hasn't. And in case you're interested, which I hope you aren't, his name is Paul. In a very loving tone, she just called him Paul."

"I most certainly am not interested. I couldn't be interested in a wolf like him. What are they saying now?"

"She's saying she likes red caviar much better than black, especially when it's dipped in sour cream."

The waiter came, filled their water glasses, and took their order. Alison waited, her hands folded in her lap, her eyes on the tablecloth. Had her gaze been level, it would have encountered that of the young man named Paul. She did not want that to happen. If it did, she would probably color like a schoolgirl, and Jane, who never missed a trick, would want to know why.

IN order to get her mind away from Paul, she began determinedly to talk about George. After all, she was going to be seeing George for the next week. In that case, it was merely common sense to concentrate on his attractive qualities.

"Tell me," she said. "Would your brother, given extenuating circumstances, pick up a blonde?"

Jane spoke with conviction. "George would never pick up any girl."

"What if he saw one he wanted very much to meet? What if he knew that if he didn't act at once, he'd never have a similar opportunity?"

"He wouldn't act. He'd forego the opportunity."

Alison took a hurried sip of water. "That's what I thought," she said softly.

The luncheon plates came. Alison had hearts of iceberg lettuce, filled with figs, peaches, apricots, pears, apples. She borrowed some of Jane's Lorenzo dressing for the lettuce, and opening one of the peanut and prune muffins, she laid a square of butter in its center. She had raised a piece of the muffin to her lips, when she had another thought.

"What about you, Jane? Suppose—just suppose—you saw someone you desperately wanted to meet. Would you let him speak to you without an introduction?"

Jane put down her knife and fork. She tightened her mouth to a thin, cold line of disapproval. She thumped her fist firmly on the table top, so that her silverware jumped.

"No!" she said, so conclusively that that seemed to be that.

By the time they returned to their coach, the afternoon was well advanced. Jane said that her headache had lessened somewhat, but she thought, if Alison did not mind, that she would take a nap. The rocking of the train had made her drowsy, and forty winks ought to pep her up.

Alison urged her to take the nap. That was why, when the train pulled into White River Junction for a stop-over of half an hour, Alison started alone for the ice-cream stand at the foot of the station. Jane was sleeping so peacefully, her face relaxed and smooth and happy, that Alison had not the heart to disturb her. It would be a shame, Alison thought, to get her up just for something to eat.

The sun burned in the hot summer sky. There was not a breeze stirring, and a dusty haze hung over the tracks.

[Turn page]



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AT 60

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VETERANS:

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On the open train platform, Alison hesitated. She didn't know whether she wanted to leave the coolness of the coach or not.

"Nice work, pretty one," a pleasant baritone voice at her elbow said. "I knew you could give your duenna the slip if you tried."

Alison turned, to discover the amused face of the young man named Paul. Once again, he was grinning. He had an unusual grin; it involved not simply his mouth, but his left eyebrow and the bridge of his nose. His left eyebrow went up, and the bridge of his nose crinkled.

"And what," she asked loftily, "makes you think I tried?"

"Why, because you're coming down the line with me to have a soda."

She tried to frost her voice. "But wouldn't three be a crowd?"

"If by any chance you're referring to a certain blonde, she's sitting back in the coach." He laughed, and winked. "Anyway, don't tell me you're jealous!"

"Jealous? I assure you, I am not jealous. I think you two make a charming couple."

"What sort of couple do you think you and I would make?"

"We'd fight like cats and dogs."

"How about having that soda, and seeing how long we can go without fighting?"

She was walking down the platform. Although she did not glance his way, she knew that he was keeping pace with her. When she reached the ice-cream stand, and climbed upon the tall stool, he climbed upon the adjacent one.

His persistence both pleased and dismayed her. She was pleased, because he was so good-looking and gay and sure of himself. She was dismayed, because she knew he had that blonde back in the coach, sort of in reserve. Besides, there was George, waiting for her in Stowe. And George was nice, too, if in a different way.

SO, as she felt she should, she protested.

"Really," she said, "I don't know your name, or anything about you. I—"

"The name is Martin. Paul Martin. I live in Forest Hills, Long Island. I'm

an engineer." He took out his wallet, and opened it on the counter. "I have various data which will further identify me. Driver's license, I. D. card, social security—"

"Oh," she said, "I haven't any doubt you're Paul Martin, and an engineer and so on. What I can't understand is—is your pursuit of me."

He reproved her with a glance. "Surely you must occasionally look in the mirror."

"Now, you're not going to tell me I'm beautiful—"

"I'm going to tell you that you have the most bewitching green eyes I've ever seen, and plenty of lashes and a cute little nose with three freckles on it. For my money, that's beauty."

The attendant came over, and asked them what they'd have. Alison ordered a double chocolate soda, and Paul said he wanted a caramel sundae with pecans on top. Alison took a paper napkin from the aluminum container, and spread it on her lap. She peeled the tissue from a rainbow-striped straw, and crumpled the tissue between her fingers.

"Not bad," she conceded. "Your line isn't bad at all. If I'm not being too curious, what did you tell the blonde?"

"Look, can't you forget that blonde?" "Have you?"

He groaned. "If you must know, I took her to lunch in the hope of making you green-eyed. Now, will you be as frank with me, and tell me where you're going, and can I get to see you?"

The man brought Paul's sundae and her soda. She inserted her straw into the pale brown froth, and took a sip.

"My name," she said, "is Alison Ware. I'm going to Stowe. I plan to spend a week on Mount Mansfield, resting and eating and exploring the trail. My companions will be Jane Pritchard, whom you have met, and her brother, George Pritchard."

Paul stopped her. "George? Let me get this straight. Are you engaged to George?"

"Hardly. I've met him only twice."

"And what is he like?"

"I first saw him at our faculty dinner. He wore tails, and smoked cork-tipped cigarettes, and did an excellent samba. He seemed nice." Remembering, she

stared into her soda. "The next time I saw him was at a cocktail party. Jane gave it. Most of the people there were middle-aged and a little stuffy, so George and I sat in the kitchen and talked."

"About what?"

"His book. He's spending the summer on Mansfield, so he can finish writing it."

"What kind of book?"

"History. Mostly, he says, an evaluation of the Federalist Papers."

"Then he's intelligent."

"Oh, very."

"And do you like your men intelligent?"

"Of course."

"So intelligent, that when the party is middle-aged and a little stuffy, they liven it up by talking about the books they're writing?"

Alison swallowed a larger portion of ice-cream than she meant to. Paul Martin, engineer from Forest Hills, was beginning to disconcert her.

"Naturally," she said briskly, "we didn't simply talk about his book. We discussed other things."

"Such as?"

"Why, I—I don't recall."

"You would have, if he'd said the right things. If he'd said that you were lovely and young and sweet." He placed his hand over hers warmly. "I'd have said those things, Alison, if I'd been there."

She could never be sure why she acted as she did. Possibly she was afraid that Jane might come in, and possibly, she was just shy. At any rate, she pulled her hand from beneath Paul Martin's.

"I wish you wouldn't," she said stiffly.

At once, his manner changed. Until now, he had seemed confidence itself, had played the role of the wolf without a false note. But when she withdrew her hand so abruptly, an odd look came into his eyes. She couldn't quite decide what the look was. She thought it might be one of hurt.

"Sorry," he said shortly.

She found herself stammering. "Paul, I didn't mean—that is, I—"

[Turn page]

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He got off the stool, leaving his sundae. "Never mind. I think I understand. Forget it."

BEFORE she could say another word, he was gone.

And then a shadow fell across the counter. She did not have to turn to discover that the shadow belonged to Jane. It was a good thing, she told herself, that she had been curt with Paul Martin. Had he stayed a minute longer, he would have clashed with Jane.

"Alison, what in the world are you doing here?" Jane said.

"I'm having a soda," Alison replied, with a sigh.

"I got such a start, waking up and finding you gone. That old lady sitting across the aisle told me I'd probably see you here." She took the place vacated by Paul Martin. "You know, don't you, that the train could have left without you?"

"We've got a stop of half an hour."

"I suppose so. By the way, I saw that fellow Paul. He was coming back to the train, and he looked mad as a hatter."

"I wonder why," said Alison, faintly.

They went back to the train which, in due time, pulled away from the station. The afternoon dragged on, hot and humid. After a while, it turned into an evening which was also hot and humid. Alison could hardly believe it when they arrived in the outskirts of Waterbury.

Scrambling for her coat, her magazines and her suitcase, she exclaimed:

"Oh, Jane! We're here! We're here!"

"You sound surprised," Jane said tolerantly.

"The trip seemed so long I'm as tired as if I'd dug a ditch. Will George be here to meet us, do you think?"

"I imagine George is at the hotel. We can take a taxi."

In their anxiety not to leave anything behind them, they were among the last to dismount from the train. When they reached the lone taxi, they found it almost filled. There was one seat left, in the back. It was between two old ladies, neither of whom appeared inclined to try to make any more room.

"Well, we're out of luck," Jane said. "We'd better both wait for the next trip."

"But your headache. You still have it, haven't you?"

"Yes," replied Jane, tiredly. "I still have it."

"You go ahead, dear," Alison urged her. "I don't mind waiting for the next trip."

"But—"

Alison spoke to the cab driver. "How long before you can come back this way?"

"It may be an hour miss."

Alison made the decision. "You can't wait that long, Jane, feeling the way you do. You'd better go to the hotel, and I'll stop somewhere and have some dinner."

After due persuasion, Jane got into the cab. She had to climb over one of the old ladies, as well as a fat little boy who was sitting on the floor, eating a lollipop. As the cab started, she waved to Alison. "See that you do eat dinner!" she advised. "And not another salad! Some meat and potatoes and—"

Then the cab was gone. Alison sat on her suitcase, propping her chin in her hands, and trying to decide what to do. From where she sat, she could see no restaurants or drug stores. But, she told herself, Waterbury must have at least one restaurant and one drug store. She wished she had the energy to start searching. All she wanted to do was sit and try to rest.

At that moment, a royal blue sedan, not new, but highly polished, drew up to the curb. None other than Paul Martin thrust his head above the door.

"Good evening, pretty one," he said.

"You seem sad and forlorn. May I be of any assistance?"

"That car!" she cried. "Where did you get that car?"

"I happened to have a kindly old aunt living here in Waterbury. Just across the street, in fact. This is her car."

She passed her hand across her forehead. "I'll bet," she whispered, "that you pulled the whole thing out of a hat."

"Be that as it may, how about letting me take you to your hotel?"

She wanted to accept his offer. If it hadn't been for the taxi's coming back, she would have. But of course, the taxi

[Turn page]



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was coming back.

"No, thank you," she said. "I've asked the cab driver to pick me up on his next trip."

"We'll reach Mansfield before he does, and head him off."

Still she was doubtful.

"Oh, Paul, I'm not sure I ought to."

"Look here," he told her. "If you don't let me drive you to the hotel, you'll be sitting here for an hour. You'll get hot, tired, bored. You'll hardly be in a condition to meet and impress this George of yours."

"I see. Your sole reason for offering me a ride is to help me impress George."

"That's right," he said guilelessly.

"Paul Martin, you lie like the rug on the floor."

"All right," he confessed, grinning. "I'm lying. Actually, I hope that you and George speedily come to detest each other. For the last time, will you accept that lift?"

ALISON rose from her suitcase, and smoothed her skirt. She folded her coat over one arm, rolled her magazine beneath the other, and faced Paul Martin.

"Are you sure," she asked, "that we can get to Mansfield before the taxi?"

Driving through Waterbury, Paul pointed out the church, the post office, the drug store. He said that in winter Waterbury was lively and cosmopolitan, playing host to skiers from New York, Boston, and Montreal. Week-ends, the snow trains disgorged enough people to populate a good-sized town. Stowe was even busier. But in summer, the whole country more less hibernated.

"Paul, you amaze me," Alison said. "It seems just too pat, your having an aunt in Waterbury, and your happening along in a car, like a knight errant, when I was stranded."

He peered out on the long, misty road. "I could tell you that we were meant to meet. I was meant to have an aunt in Waterbury, and to happen by when I did."

"All that sounds nice," she admitted, "but I don't especially believe in fate."

"Don't you? Then I'll have to see about changing your mind right away. Needless to say, I'll be coming up to

Mansfield every day to see you. From the summit, I shall point out Smugler's Notch Road and Lake Champlain and—"

"But what about George? What is meant to happen to him?"

"George? Oh, George is meant to finish writing his book. An evaluation of the Federalist Papers, I think you said."

"In case you've forgotten," she reminded him, "George has other talents besides writing. He also does the samba."

"But which does he prefer—writing or the samba?"

"Why, writing."

"There you are."

The ascent of the mountain was hard on the royal blue sedan. On the way up, they saw bubbling green springs, before which were posted signs advising them to cool their engines. Between the heavy trees, the cliffs dropped steeply, their slopes bristling with conifers and shubbery. The panorama of roads, farms and fields vanished to the horizon. Evening sunlight, a real-gold patina, touched every leaf and stone.

Suddenly they were in the broad, cleared space at the top of the mountain. The hotel, cabled to the ground, was like a Swiss chalet against the vast, burnished sky. The wind blew strongly, bending the grass and the short, stunted trees. Its howling filled the air, like a woman's plaintive voice.

Paul stopped and braked the car. He laid his arm along the back of the seat "It's beautiful, isn't it?" he said.

"Like another world." Her voice was as breathless as a child's. "It's the way I hoped it would be. Windswept and bare and—and somehow fantastically lonely."

"By the time you're leaving, it will be more beautiful." His arm dropped to her shoulders. "We'll have seen it together."

She turned to him. "But Paul—"

"I know," he said patiently. "George. Well, suppose we settle George right now. Are you in love with him?"

"That—that's beside the point."

"Beside the point! It is the point!"

She tried to explain. "I've come up here with his sister. His sister is more

[Turn page]

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my boss than she is my friend. It would be difficult, wouldn't it, to get rid of her and George, to go scampering about with you?"

Paul Martin gave her an odd look, which was a combination smile and frown.

"I see," he said, "that you're determined to confuse the issue. Therefore, I shall waste no more of our time in conversation. Come here."

"But Paul—"

He took her in his arms, and dropped his cheek against hers. Then he found her lips, and kissed them, as he felt they needed to be kissed. His hand went beneath her hair, stirring it. He kissed her again.

"I've said my piece, Alison," he whispered. "I think you're the sweetest, loveliest girl I've ever seen. If you'd give me the go-ahead signal, it wouldn't take me two minutes to fall in love with you."

"Paul," she said sorrowfully, "I can't give you the go-ahead signal."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm pretty sure. You see, I—I—"

SHE was floundering, and he was not trying to help her. There was the same look in his eyes, the look of sadness and hurt, which she had seen back in the ice-cream place. He took his arm from around her shoulders.

"Okay, pretty one," he said, too lightly. "I'll turn you over to George."

Leaving the car, they climbed the rocky slope to the steps of the hotel. There did not appear to be anything else they could say to each other, and Paul was about to turn, and go back to the car. Then they came face to face with Jane Pritchard.

"Alison!" she almost shouted. "How did you get here?"

Jane's harsh tone gave Alison a start. She moved toward Paul, as if for protection.

"Mr. Martin," she said, "he—he saw me waiting outside the station. He was kind enough to offer me a lift."

Jane would not even look at Paul.

"Alison," she cried, "do you realize the taxi has just started back for you?"

"The taxi! Oh, gosh, I forgot! We were going to intercept the taxi!"

"Oh, you were! I'm afraid you're about five minutes too late for that."

At this juncture, Paul took over.

"Miss Pritchard," he said, calmly, "this is my fault. I insisted that Alison let me drive her up here. I—detained her in my car after we'd arrived. If I've upset you or her, I apologize. When the cab driver returns, I'll be more than glad to reimburse him."

"I should think you would be!" Jane flung at him.

"And your brother," Paul said, matching her rage with his tranquillity. "If you'll be kind enough to tell him Alison has arrived, I'd like to speak to him, too."

Jane started up the stairs, but spoke over her shoulder.

"You'll have to wait to speak to George. He drove into Waterbury with the taximan."

When Jane had entered the hotel, Paul and Alison faced each other. They both tried to smile, but neither of them was too successful. It was the very gloom of their expressions which started them laughing at each other. But after their laughter, came more gloom.

Paul jingled the change in his pockets. "I guess," he said, "I've got you into trouble."

She shrugged. "No serious trouble, Paul. When George gets back, I'll tell him exactly what happened."

"Will you, Alison?" Paul stopped jingling his change, and reached for her hands. "Will you tell him I kissed you? And that you liked my kissing you?" His voice dropped to a whisper. "At least, for a moment, I imagined you liked it. Did you?"

She looked up at him. She saw how blue his eyes were, in his tanned, honest face. Well, for once in her life, she would be perfectly honest, too. With him, and with herself.

"I liked it, Paul," she said.

"Oh, Alison!"

"And about George. I don't really care about George. I've tried too, but it's been no good. He can do the samba, but he's cold and withdrawn and snob-bish. He—he's like his sister."

Paul Martin's face lit up. "Then," he

[Turn page]

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said, "it's all right if I come up every day to see you? If I show you Smug-gler's Notch Road, and Lake Champlain, and—"

Impishly, she smiled up at him.

"We might even play a little bridge. You see, I brought a deck of cards."

His arm went around her efficiently. "Silly girl," he said.

THE VANITY CASE

(Continued from page 10)

manicure. You give yourself a superduper facial workout. You freshen up your eyes with eye lotion and pads so that you'll glow with glamor. You take a relaxing tub.

All this is wonderful—but why wait for special dates? It's the daily attention that counts far more than these before-a-party pickmeups. A skin that has been neglected can't be transformed into a thing of beauty in an hour. Nails and hands that have not been protected against grime and dishwater can't be made lily-white and soft to the touch at the last minute. The smartest hairdo won't make up from brush neglect or give your hair that healthy sheen so necessary to its loveliness.

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Z for Zest



LEARN to prepare foods and plan meals with imagination and skill. Make your mealtime full of Vitamin Z—for Zest. Appetites are sure to fail if you give your family the same kind of thing over and over again. And it's so easy to fall into the habit of always serving the identical combination of dishes, for instance, cole slaw with stew or pan potatoes with a roast.

Just for a change, accompany stew with a salad of romaine, watercress and tender spinach leaves, covering the whole with a favorite dressing. Au gratin potatoes would be nice with a roast, or you might have baked onions, cooked with a little honey to give them a pretty glaze.

Explore the food favorites of foreign lands. Pay a make-believe visit to Mexico by serving chili con carne. Yorkshire pudding will bring a touch of Merrie England right into the kitchen. Veal paprika turns the meal into a Hungarian rhapsody.

Once you start, you'll find many, many ways for giving your meals Vitamin Z. And cooking can become a real adventure!

Super-Special Dessert



DID you know that the National Cranberry Association has a harvest time festival every year. The bright red berries are scooped from the bogs and it's the time for real festivity in the cranberry country. They have some grand cranberry recipes, too. Here's one for a super-special dessert:

CRANBERRY BANANA TARTS

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 can jellied cranberry sauce, crushed | 1 envelope plain gelatine |
| 1 cup mashed banana (about 3 bananas) | $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water |
| Pinch salt | 6 tart shells |
| | $\frac{1}{2}$ pint heavy cream |

Combine cranberry sauce with mashed banana. Add salt. Soak gelatine in cold water 2 minutes or until softened. Place cup with gelatine in pan of boiling water and heat until dissolved. Add gelatine to cranberry-banana mixture, mixing thoroughly. Turn into baked tart shells and chill until firm. When ready to serve, cover with whipped cream.

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Did you use milk to remove ink spots? Milk should never be used on any fabric.

Did you put some glue in the water when you were cleaning woollens? Glue has no cleansing properties at all.

Other useless tricks are cleansing necklines with coffee—the cleansing action is from the water and you stand a very good chance of staining the fabric with the coffee. Grass stains cannot be removed by rubbing with lard or molasses. And finally, a cream of tartar mixture to remove rust stains is of no avail. It is difficult to rinse out the cream of tartar and the crystals remaining in the fabric might be damaging.

Removing candle grease by applying a hot iron over blotting paper is all right if the iron is not too hot and if the grease is from a white candle. For colored candles—no.

Your Noble Brow



ARE you aware that your forehead is one of the most important features of your face—and one that you are inclined to neglect, not only when it comes to makeup, but care. It stands out just as much as your nose, mouth or eyes—so don't dab at it indifferently with powder.

Don't acquire unflattering premature lines by unnecessary frowning. It's an unconscious habit with most people—you just frown, even though there's no reason for it. Learn to relax your face. Take time out—sit down comfortably, close your eyes and think your features free of tenseness. A daily massage with a rich nourishing cream will do much to give you a smooth, white, unlined and noble brow.

Quick Change Artist



CAREER GIRL? Then you know how important it is to look your best at all times—on the job or away from it. You know, too, the good impression that the right clothes make on the prospective employer.

There's a perfect rule to remember in dressing for the office—dress simply. This doesn't necessarily restrict you to a tailored shirtwaist. But it does mean to avoid a dress with too many ruffles or flounces, one that's too extreme in cut, or one whose color plainly suggests after-office dates.

Be wise in choosing your office wardrobe. Look for a dress that can be dressed up for

after-five. You'll find there are times when you rush off to a late afternoon date, without going home first. A good basic dress that can be dressed up with a scarf or jewelry is smart buying. Keep an extra scarf, or pearls or a pretty pin in your desk drawer. And it's a good idea to keep an extra hat in the office, if possible.

Learn to be a quick change artist!

Guard Your Skin



WHEN the temperature drops to freezing out come your warmest clothes—sweaters, scarves, gloves, boots—all for protection against the biting winds. But you can't wear a sweater on your face—and the cold winds do awful things to your skin.

Use a protective cream base which will guard your skin and act as a powder base as well. Smooth it over your lips, too, before applying lipstick—and no matter how icy the winds, your skin and lips will stay smooth and unchapped.

Whittle Your Waist Line



THE tiny waistlines on the new frocks are too enticing to ignore. And if your waistline calls for whittling to suit them, here's the answer.

Stand with feet apart, arms stretched high over the head, hands clasped. Pretend there is a wheel over your head and you are holding a handle which is attached to the rim. Now swing around in big circles—far to the side, way back, around, and out to the side. Move around and around, not too fast, rotating from the hips and stretching up from the waist.

[Turn page]

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Another waist-trimmer: lie on the floor and clasp your knees close to your diaphragm between your hands. Keep the stomach pulled in. Now roll far over to the right, keeping the knees pulled up in the "cradled" position. And without using your elbows to push you back, roll over to the left side. Continue rolling back and forth, letting the push from one side to the other be done with the hips. Fifty daily rolls, over and back, will work wonders!

Flowers for Milady



ARTIFICIAL flowers have become so attractive that even the fussiest decorators are using them here and there in refurbishing. Girls' rooms particularly can be prettied up with a few of them! An unframed mirror over a dressing table can be made utterly charming by the addition of a garland of daisies to frame the lower edge. Loop back the ruffled window curtains with daisy garlands.

To renew artificial flowers, first trim away the ragged parts and then shake the flowers over the steam from a boiling kettle. Be sure not to get the flowers wet.

And while we're talking about flowers, here's a good spot to mention several methods of keeping your cut flowers fresh longer. Camphor added to the water will work wonders. A small quantity of saltpeter, a pinch of soda or salt, or an aspirin tablet added to the water helps cut flowers keep their freshness. Clip the ends of the flowers and change the water daily. Always pull off the leaves that would be in the water before arranging them. Corsages and cut flowers keep well when wrapped in waxed paper and stored in the refrigerator.

Ironing Tips



THERE'S a grand little booklet around town that gives you some tips on how to make ironing an easy job. Here are a few hints on how to keep the effort down to a minimum.

In pressing trousers (slacks, too) slide the top of the trousers over the narrow end of the ironing board and press. Then remove

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and fold trouser legs together, pressing one leg at a time. Raise the top leg to press the one underneath.

Press all skirts on wrong side. To press pleated skirts, pin pleats in place at hem and waist. Start pressing at hem. Slide the iron toward the waist.

Lipstick Perfection



WHAT makes a good lipstick? It should be easy to apply and not greasy. It should not bleed. It should remain soft enough to apply in cold weather. It should not crumble or crack. It should have a pleasant odor and taste and the colors should be well blended and ground into the wax and oil base!

GIRLS ARE LIKE THAT

(Continued from page 93)

He said slowly, "You made me kiss you. You succeeded in exactly what you set out to do. And all the time that note was lying on my desk."

"Oh, forget it!" she exclaimed, her patience worn beyond endurance. "I've admitted everything. What more can I say? Be a misanthrope the rest of your life. See if I care!"

He was silent for a moment, then, "That's it—to see if you care. That's what I came for, Leslie. There's only one girl who can restore my faith. I won't accept a proxy."

His arms were around her now, and she had no will or wish to resist. To feel his lips on hers was a heaven she had never thought to find again.

After a long time, she leaned backward against the strength of his arms, to look past his face into the starry depths of the sky.

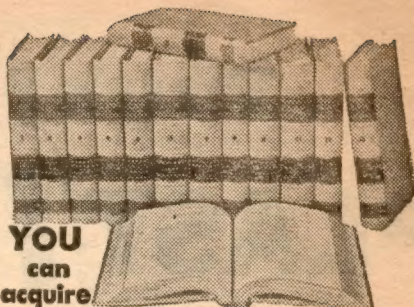
"You wouldn't know," she breathed, "but when I walked up here I was so tired I didn't think I could drag my feet upstairs. Now I feel as if I could fly—without wings."

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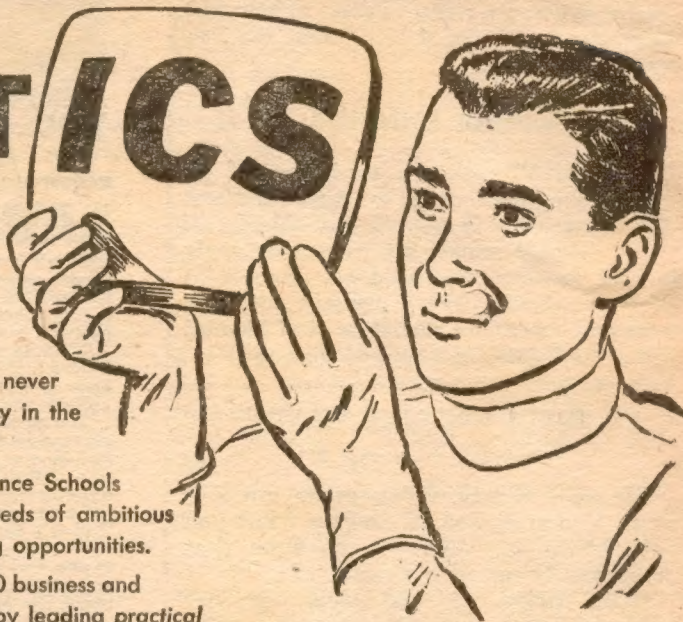
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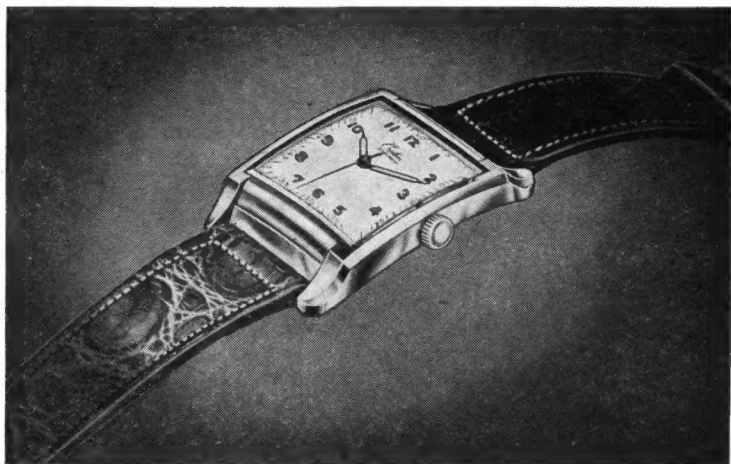
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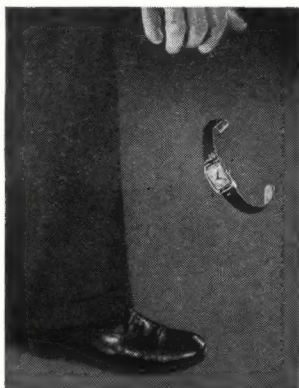
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